THE CHILD-HUNTERS.

BY

A FRIEND OF ITALY.

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THE CHILD-HUNTERS.

"Vengeance to the Wolves that devour the Lambs!"

Motto of the Italian Carbonari.

THE

CHILD-HUNTERS.

BY

A Friend of Italy.

Charles Wheeler Denison

"O, my soul, come not thou into their secret: unto their assembly, mine honor, be not thou united."—HOLY WRIT.

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TO

MESSRS. E. P. AND E. G. FABBRI,

ITALIAN MERCHANTS OF NEW YORK,

WHOSE GOOD DEEDS FOR THEIR COUNTRY ARE THE PRAISE OF ALL WHO KNOW THEM,

This Volume is Dedicated

BY

THE AUTHOR.

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THE CHILD-HUNTERS.

CHAPTER I.

THE MANSION DI LAPO.

Oft, what seems
A trifle, a mere nothing in itself,
In some nice situations turns the scale
Of life, and rules the most important actions.

Thompson.

ON the banks of the beautiful river Arno, in the city of Florence, Italy, lived two native Italian families. They occupied the same house, which stood in a commanding position, overlooking the water, the bridges, and the scenery of the country beyond. It was a venerable and artistic building; once the studio of the celebrated Tuscan sculptor, Arnolfi di Lapo. Here he designed the elegant statues which still adorn the *Ponte Della Santa Trinita*—or Bridge of the Holy Trinity—one of the most splendid of the four bridges that span the Arno.

Long years had elapsed since the death of its former occupants; but traces of the magnificence of the ancient building still remained. The arches, the niches, the classic windows and ceilings were the same, though the lofty passage-way that separated the two main rooms, on the first story, was now obstructed by a thin partition, reaching from the marble mosaic floor to the

circle of the arch. In the centre was a small door, for the ingress and egress of the present inhabitants. The front room, or that nearest the Arno, was tenanted by one family; the rear room, looking toward the lofty amphitheatre of hills that crown the city of Florence, by another. With the characteristic sociability of the Italian people, these two families lived together almost as one under the gorgeous roof of the *Mansion di Lapo.* There was but one principal entrance to the mansion, which required the families to pass and repass each other in frequent intercourse. Opportunities for friendly national greetings constantly occurred, so that the most intimate social relations grew up between them.

The people of Tuscany, of which province Florence is the capital city, are proverbially courteous to each other, and equally polite to strangers. It was quite natural, therefore, that these two families, occupying together this old Italian mansion, should become intimate.

The family in the great front room was composed of Manuel Garcia, together with his wife, Marguerite, and their young daughter, Lucia. The family in the rear room consisted of precisely the same number of persons,—Giovanni Ferenza, together with his wife, Angela, and Lorette, their only daughter. They all had the appearance common to such Italians; but, for the most part, there was a great disparity between the two families.

Manuel Garcia was a silent, retiring man of the world. His business was that of a superintendent in one of the white Parian marble-works with which Florence so much abounds. A flourishing establishment of this kind was located near the old *Mansion di Lapo.*

Marguerite Garcia, the wife, was a sly, artful, designing woman; the personification of superstitious selfishness; ever on the alert for a sharp bargain, and by low intrigue to compass her ends. Withal, she was a creature of strong impulses and fierce passions; the embodiment of the warm climate in which she was born, with more of its mysterious than of its glowing sunshine in her character. In the gratification of her instincts, conscience seldom opposed any obstacle; and if it did, she silenced its unwelcome monitions with the secret assurance that the stipend of money would secure her pardon in advance.

Lucia Garcia, the bright daughter, was a beautiful Italian child. She was like a ray of sunshine let in between the silent moodiness of the father and the misty superstition of the mother. Her lively character was the living link that bound in harmony together two opposite extremes. She had the dark complexion and glossy black hair peculiar to most Florentine children. Her eyes were large, black, keen and piercing. Her manner was intensely saucy and independent. Nothing of the kind could be more jaunty than her style of juvenile dress, especially the set of her Tuscan hat, with its broad band and black waving plume. When decked out in her holiday attire, to attend some gay Florentine festival, such as the *Corso dei Barberi,* or the Race of the Horses, without riders, which drew immense crowds to the open space in the longest street of Florence, she was considered one of the most attractive young girls in all the gay city.

Mrs. Garcia was the mother of two boys. One of them had grown up wild and reckless under the irreligious influence of his home. He had run away from his parents to the neighboring seaport of Leghorn,

and become a sailor. The call of his country, in her struggle for independence, soon compelled his shipment on board an Italian man-of-war. The other and younger son was serving as an apprentice, under his father, in the fashionable marble-works.

All four of this family of Italians were victims of the spirit of the lazzaroni — the idle, worthless, vagabond spirit which has for so many ages been the curse and crime of Italy. They were swayed to and fro, like atoms in the wind, or like leaves floating on the stream, by habits of life that had grown well-nigh invincible by long-continued indulgence. They had no real restraint on the bad passions that controlled them; no pleasant memories of the past; no bright hopes of the future. They had a domestic hearthstone; but it was lit up by garish fires, it was warmed by fitful and uncertain heats. They had a family altar; but it was one of mere ornament, on which the flame was kept burning through clouds of stifling incense, that they were constantly kindling to superstition. Their dwelling was like an ornamented cave; full of odors, bedecked with flowers, but without one really genial ray of comfort, or a single gleam of true refinement. It was the varnish of low art, destitute of the genius of intelligence and piety, so common among the great mass of the families of Italy. No wonder such families have so long been a prey to the designing arts of the wicked.

Mr. and Mrs. Ferenza, as we have already intimated, were quite different people from Mr. and Mrs. Garcia. Ferenza, the husband and father, was employed in one of the large floral establishments of Florence. Here he had become a proficient in the cultivation of those beautiful flowers and plants for which Florence has long been celebrated throughout the world. His wife

occupied a suitable portion of her spare time, at home, in arranging bouquets for the Florentine and other markets. Many of her sweet floral clusters might be seen and their rich odors inhaled in the fashionable promenades and elegant parties of the day.

They had no son. It was the wish of both father and mother that Lorette might choose their calling. She had already been well received in her rounds of visits as one of the most attractive flower-girls of Florence. It was hoped that she might ultimately settle down as a permanent occupant of the old *Mansion di Lapo*, on the beautiful banks of the Arno, and be a flower merchant.

Lorette Ferenza, like Lucia Garcia, was an ardent devotee of music. Like her, also, she had chosen that profession as her own.

Although thus united in their choice, the two girls were in many other respects quite dissimilar in their characters. Lucia was bold, dashing, piquant and ambitious. Lorette was modest, retiring, gentle and humble in her aspirations. She cared more about doing good to others, less for herself.

Lucia made herself familiar with almost every person she might chance to meet in her daily walks. Always chatty, always buoyant, she threw the charm of a genial girlish presence over every circle into which she happened to be cast. Lorette, while equally charming and attractive, drew all to her with a silent grace that was as sweet as it was bewitching.

Of the two girls, Lorette was the more beautiful and prepossessing. But the delicacy which was the prominent feature of her character kept her, at first, more out of public notice, and less likely at once to secure general applause — though, in the end, her attractions

proved fully equal to those of her companion. She selected for the accompaniment of her performances a small, neat guitar.

Lucia chose the tinkling, noisy tambourine. Its every motion was an echo of her buoyancy. When dressed in full brigand style, her pet hat perched on top of her dark mass of curly hair, deftly displaying their raven gloss, she delighted to toss her little head with a jaunty air, and burst out, like a soaring lark, in a sudden transport of song. At the close, she was wont to shake her head, as she shook her tambourine, in triumphs of gayety — as if she felt that she had conquered the applause of the listener, and was determined to enjoy it.

Lorette came forward to her audience with a slight, unassuming bow. She always conformed to the Italian custom of kissing the hand to the listener. Then, with a few short, delicate touches on her guitar, she sang her tender song. When she had finished, her eyes bent modestly before the gaze of her admiring listeners; she gave one or two concluding touches on her instrument, and dropped a respectful curtesy.

As you listened to these two gifted daughters of Italy, you were at a loss which to admire the most. They were both charming in their way. At one time you would admire Lorette the most; at another time, Lucia. Still, when their performances were both over, and you drew the comparison in your judgment between the two, there was, after all, a secret preference. Lucia dazzled, Lorette charmed. Lucia attracted the most public attention. Lorette secured the most silent and most lasting admiration. You were carried away by Lucia, as with a torrent of melody — dashing, foaming, full of sparkle and brilliancy. Then came Lo-

rette, like a clear, full crystal river, with a surface resplendent with the soft beams of pure light, steady and beautiful in the current that bore you on. The flowing trills and murmurs of Lorette lingered longest in the memory.

Thus far, however, the practice of these two gifted musical Italian girls was only the practice of the home circle. Florence has many such children. It is the birthplace of the greatest musical families of the world. Yet these two youthful and inexperienced artists were to be called to encounter the public of this renowned musical city in some of its most famous thoroughfares. A few of the immediate neighbors living in the ancient *Piazza di Lapo*, or Lapo Square, as it is called, had come into the venerable *Mansion di Lapo*, when invited, and listened in private to the performances of Lucia and Lorette.

Among these gratified listeners was one Marco Vincens, an Italian padrone, or leader and *patron* of children, who resided in the neighborhood. He was the avowed enthusiastic admirer of the performances of both these musical girls. With the keen eye of his profession, he saw there was money in them; and he was determined to get them under his control, that he might possess, if possible, all their future earnings.

With consummate skill and tact, Vincens applied himself to the work of possessing both the children through flattery of their parents. He began, very shrewdly, with the mother of Lucia. He saw, at a glance, the weak points of Mrs. Garcia. Ah! how little did these two children know at that moment what scenes of future life were before them!

Once, when there was to be a public financial scheme carried out on the *Piazza di Duomo*, or Square of the

Grand Cathedral of Florence, the talents of the two children were called into requisition. They were to appear before the public in character. It was a severe test for such young performers. But the training of Mrs. Ferenza proved equal to the occasion.

The amateur Lucia was to appear as a juvenile mountaineer. She came from Piedmont, and dressed and sang the character to perfection. Nothing of the kind could excel her jaunty dress or her dashing, off-hand manner, or her full, strong gushes of song, like the wild singing-birds of her native mountains.

Lorette was a flower-girl from Etruria. In a neat, modest attire, charming and beautiful in its simplicity, she sold her bouquets to the sweet strains of her own native melody.

All the exhibition was thoroughly Italian. Of course, it gave becoming satisfaction to the Italian company that thronged the great public square. It was a complete success; affording Lucia and Lorette a most happy introduction to their favorite pursuit.

Like the serpent hidden in the leafy bowers of Eden, Marco Vincens was there. His evil eye watched every motion of the two girl performers. His artful ear listened to every one of their sweet songs. He was overjoyed when he beheld the shower of bouquets falling on the stage, and heard the rapturous plaudits that burst from the assembled throng. It was the hour of innocent triumph to the children and their good object. It was the hour of a secret plot to Marco Vincens. The moment the performance was over, he lost no time in having another secret interview with Mrs. Garcia, and in taking additional steps, in concert with her, to carry out his plans.

The padroni of Italy are a dark, mysterious, sly

class of men — the descendants and allies of the most consummate villains of the Italian gipsy tribes. They are first among the most practised deceivers of the humbler families of Europe. Their skill in seducing parents to sell away the birthrights of their children, sometimes under the most specious promises of pecuniary gains, sometimes with allurements of vulgar ambition and ease, is well known to all European residents and travellers who have become at all familiar with the traits of gipsy character, or the pursuits of the padroni. Marco Vincens was one of the most finished of this class of adepts in wickedness. He sought out his victim-children with the assiduity of a fiend that never tired. He plied his infernal arts with a skill that compassed all requisite knowledge. As Satan approached the ear of Eve, so he approached Italian parents — not so much to possess them, as their children. He was a Child-Hunter.

He knew Marguerite Garcia. He had known her from her youth up. He knew that her husband was as pliant in her hands as clay in the hands of the potter. The absent son, then at sea, could take no adverse part. The opposition of the apprentice boy, should he make any, would be of no account.

His plans were laid deeply and carefully. He must have both of the girls. One victim was not enough. Here arose his first difficulty — the consent of Mr. and Mrs. Ferenza. How, especially, could he obtain the consent of the fondly-loving mother of Lorette? If that consent could not be obtained, how could he carry off the girl, in spite of it? Have her, as the fitting companion of Lucia, he must and would. How was he to do it?

His opening part of the plot was the appointment

of a meeting of all concerned at the *Mansion di Lapo.* Here began his secret plans. Flattery, falsehood, bribery, were his chief tools with which to work, and well he knew, by experience, that they were more potent tools for such secret schemes than all the kits of the most accomplished burglar could supply.

The evening for the meeting came. It was a clear Italian night. The elegant bridges across the lovely Arno were thronged with passing travellers. The lamps were all lit, and reflected their radiance, like so many clusters of great brilliant diamonds, in the still waters of the river. Above the rows of splendid statues that stood on the principal bridge, alike monuments of his works and of the name of Di Lapo, the silent moon looked down on the scene. Beyond were the classic heights, that for so many ages have overlooked the walls and gates of Florence. Leading off from the main bridge stood the grand Cathedral *Di Duomo* — or Church of the Holy Mother. The towers and spires in all parts of the city were resplendent with the silvery light. The hanging gardens, the clustering vines, the tapering poplar-trees, gave their turrets and foliage to the dewy kisses of the moon; while the tide of living humanity passed on in teeming waves beneath its silent beams.

On the lower side of the great *Bridge of the Trinity,* the masterpiece of its class in Florence, if not in all Italy, might be seen stealthily creeping rapidly along the dark figure of a man. He was alone. His dress was a mixture of the clerical and mercantile style. He carried a stout stick in his right hand, as if disinclined to be molested in his way, although not using it for guidance or support. He turned his glance furtively around, seemingly looking for some one to meet him,

but paying little or no attention to any one else in the thoroughfare. His path lay in the shadows of the dark side of the way.

When he came to that part of the old Italian square leading to the main door of the *Mansion di Lapo*, he suddenly encountered the person he had evidently been anxiously seeking — a tall, dark man, with the visage of a brigand, wearing a low slouched hat, and dressed in the garb of a sailor. He was the captain of an emigrant and Italian merchant-ship, running between the seaports of Leghorn and New York. This strong Tuscan city of Pisanio has one of the best harbors on the shores of the great Mediterranean Sea, and has long been noted for its large commerce, especially with the United States of America.

Captain Solfo del Paso was an adept of his class. Shrewd, cunning, an extensive traveller, well posted in the ways of the world, and especially in all the arts and mysteries of his extensive trade, he had made himself a perfect master of all the intricacies of the emigrant part of his business. He had secretly studied all the ins and outs of the approaches to Italian circles, where the most promising children suited to his purposes were to be found. His familiarity, as a sailor, with different languages, gave him access to the parties with whom he wished to deal, in Italy, while his address made him equally at home with the padroni and other child-stealers in America. He knew his men. He knew his plans — and they were always matured, ready for instant action.

"Halloo! Marco! I say, is that you?" exclaimed the captain del Paso, as he emerged out of the darkness of the way into the light of the solitary ancient lamp that stood in front of the *Di Lapo* mansion.

"Yes! this is me," replied the padrone, Vincens, as he came slily to the captain's side, wrapping his cloak closely about him. "And I'm right glad that's you. I began to think you would keep me waiting here all night, until everybody here in the house had gone to bed, and the street watchmen would take me up for a wanderer and a vagrant."

"*You* taken up for a wanderer and a vagrant!" suddenly interrupted the captain. "Ha! ha! that's a good joke — too good, by half, to be lost here in this misty night on the Arno! A reputable citizen of *your* established character 'a vagrant!' A commercial gentleman so well known as *you* are, 'a wanderer!' Come, now, that will do, my dear Vincens! It will, indeed! Here, my 'vagrant,' or my 'wanderer,' whichever you like best, let's step into this cassino vault, and wash that joke down with some old Cognac brandy. It'll take the strongest we can find here to enable us to swallow *that!*"

"Nonsense!" retorted Vincens. "We've no time, at this late hour, to waste on such stuff. We're on more important business, now. We'll talk about 'vagrants' and 'wanderers,' after we've bagged our game."

"All right!" exclaimed the captain, with a sardonic smile, as he opened his teeth, like a devouring beast, while they shone and glistened in the glare of the door-lamp. "No danger of *your* forgetting that part of the play, I'll warrant. But, as you say, business before pleasure. Let's go in."

"Here's the door!" whispered the padrone, hoarsely. "Follow me!"

These emphatic words were instantly followed by a loud rapping with the ancient Florentine knocker that hung loosely in the well-worn jaws of the shaggy lion's

head, that for more than a century had adorned the massive front door.

Without waiting for any one to answer the call by coming to the old arched gateway, the two men silently opened the portal and as quietly entered.

"Stop a moment," said the captain to the padrone, in a low, husky whisper.

They paused hastily, and came closer together in the dark and dusty hall.

They were standing on the classic spot where, more than a hundred years before, the great Italian artist had stood.

"No one seems to have heard our knock," continued the captain. "We are not likely to be interrupted here, at least for a few moments. I've a word, Vincens, for your private ear."

"Say on," brusquely, but cautiously, replied the padrone.

"Well, then, listen; and mind you take heed to what I say," the captain replied. "Are you quite sure, Vincens, that we perfectly understand each other as to the details of this affair?"

"I think we do, captain."

"You *think* we do? *That'll* not answer, padrone Vincens. We must not only think we do—we must be *sure* we do! Look me straight in the eye, Marco. Do you remember the vows we made to each other, just as we came out, side by side, from the confessional at the cathedral *di Duomo?*"

"Yes, captain."

"Ah! you answer very flippantly 'yes, captain!' to everything I say. Now, Marc, I can get just such an answer as that from any smart parrot I bring from the island of Madeira. Answer me directly, Marco Vin-

cens! Do you *know*, on the peril of your soul, exactly what you have bound yourself to me to do, in this matter of these Florentine children?"

"On the peril of my soul, I do," slowly responded the padrone, still looking the captain steadily in his eyes, that at the instant were flashing darkly upon him.

"And do you now re-swear to me here?" added the captain, clutching the padrone by the hand, as they drew still closer in the gloomy and dusty passage.

"Do you swear, padrone," the captain continued, his husky voice growing still more husky, and sinking to the lowest possible whisper, "that you will render to the treasurer of our firm an exact account of all you receive for the hire of these children?"

"I swear!" responded the padrone.

"On the peril of your soul?" asked the captain.

"On the peril of my soul!" answered the padrone.

"*Now* we *do* understand each other," quickly added the captain, raising his voice, and speaking with emphasis. "Go in!" he continued, waving his bronzed hand with an imperious gesture, and pointing with his bony forefinger to the inner door. "These two beautiful girls of Italy are at our mercy!"

In silence and darkness they entered.

CHAPTER II.

THE CHILD-HUNT.

The tear down childhood's cheek that flows,
Is like the dew-drop on the rose;
When next the summer breeze comes by,
And waves the bush, the tear is dry.

Scott.

IT was the room of the family of the Garcias. The Ferenzas were there. The two girls, Lucia and Lorette, sat quietly by. The tambourine of Lucia leaned idly against the wall. On the little centre-table, in the middle of the room, lay in silence the guitar of Lorette. The vaulted ceiling, stuccoed with sundry relics of the great master, Di Lapo, hung over the scene a life-like picture of a bygone age. In the small niches, on projecting brackets, stood images of Christ and the Virgin Mary, while crosses and other memorials of religious faith were interspersed around. The soft Italian sky poured in the dim light of evening, and the solitary taper on the Parian marble mantel shed a faint radiance on the faces of all present. The silence was as deep and dread as that of an empty tomb.

Immediately on entering, the captain and padrone assumed the air of men born to command. They showed by their manner that they felt that everything in the room, nay, in the house itself, including the occupants of men, women and children, belonged wholly to them.

The captain coolly took possession, with the slightest nod of recognition, of the chair obsequiously proffered him, and imperiously motioned Vincens to help himself to another.

The padrone assumed a more demure look — a sly, dark, cunning expression of visage — as if he had a favor to ask, and was resolved on using every possible art to secure it. He removed his Florentine cap, smoothed down his raven hair, stroked his glossy beard, and gave a stolen glance from beneath his black, shaggy eyebrows, that was full of subtle meaning. It was the glance of the basilisk in his lair — the gleam of the eye of the tiger before he makes his spring. He was a beast of prey, hunting hungrily for his victims among unprotected parents and helpless little children. He was a Child-Hunter.

There sat one father, Manuel Garcia, with a mingled look of anxiety and fear on his countenance; and yet giving sad proof that he was already submitting, in advance, to the spoilers of his home. He seemed to show that he felt his bereavement in anticipation, and was stolidly thinking how he might repair the wrong he was about to suffer by the pursuit of his calling. His poor, ignorant mind was silently seeking for consolation among his purlieus of Tuscan marbles. Mrs. Garcia, on the contrary, listened with the deepest interest. She knew what was coming, what the proposal was which the captain and padrone had come to make. Her large black eyes sparkled and flashed with the hidden light that was behind and shone through them. Her fingers twitched nervously, as she listened to the conversation that had at once commenced. She acted as if she were already clutching the much-coveted treasure that was to come to her from the sale of her child.

Lucia, the pert pet, the gay coquette, looked on with idle indifference. She seemed to say, by her flippant manner, that she cared but little what became of her, so she had plenty of fine clothes, gay times, and crowds of admirers. At the very moment her liberty was being bargained away, she, giddy girl! was planning a new fancy attire, and a scene of street display.

Mr. and Mrs. Ferenza were both taken by surprise. They looked dejected, and showed by their manners that they were sad at heart. They knew, alas! the professional calling of the padrone, the hunter and enslaver of children. They knew the commercial power of the captain; and that they were as clay in his grasp. As true parents, even ignorant and superstitious as they had grown up to be in the fair land of Italy, they could not shut their eyes to the lessons of the past; and they therefore dreaded these omens of the future.

Was their dear Lorette indeed to be taken from them? Was she to be carried away from their lowly home, to be subject to all the caprices of strangers, in a strange and far-off land?

A copy of the New Testament, in the Italian language, had been placed in their hands by the good providence of God. A christian lady from America, visiting Florence, while purchasing flowers of Lorette, had given her the holy book. Both parents and child had learned to read it sufficiently to be able to trace on its inspired pages, this question:

'*Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?*'

Reading on a little further, the same infallible book had answered the question to them in the words of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ:

'*Even so, every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit.*

'Wherefore, by their fruits ye shall know them.'

Mrs. Ferenza thought of these true and living words of Christ, as she quietly listened to the cunningly-devised fables of the captain and padrone. The tears stole silently into her downcast eyes. She thought of her dear lamb, nestling in her bosom; and she felt as if ravening wolves had forced themselves into her home-fold to steal the darling one away, to be torn in pieces. The dreaded child-hunters were indeed upon them.

Mr. Ferenza, faithful and true father, shared fully in the trembling solicitude of his wife. Sadly and silently he turned away from the chattering padrone, and from the more reticent and dark-eyed captain. His heart sank within him. Poor Lorette! He saw her hunted like a partridge in its cot, with no one really able to protect.

She stood by the table, on which laid her sweet guitar, between both her parents. Her swimming eyes were fixed moodily on the floor. Like a chaste statue of her own Italy, she was as fair as Parian marble and as pure. Not a limb or a muscle moved as she gazed into the dim and uncertain future. Her fine features were shaded as the light streamed in upon them, as if at the moment a cloud were passing in the sunny sky.

The child-hunt was now at the full. The fences around the homestead were being broken down. The feet of ruthless invaders were rudely and cruelly trampling down the flowers that grew in that humble parterre. The hunters pressed on, like men who were sure of their victims. Slily and secretly they signalled to one another, and sprang with overmastering strength on their unprotected game.

A bound — a clutch — a thrill: and the child-hunt was over!

There was a third hunter in this hunt for life. A stranger came suddenly in. He was an old man. His countenance was more swarthy than was usual, even among the common people of Southern Italy. His person was low and slightly bent. A sharp goatee beard protruded from his sharp chin, like the hook of a beast of prey. His eyes were deeply set in his head, beneath long, dark, shaggy eyebrows, and glowed with a shrouded light, like the fire of a furnace from beneath its overhanging doors. His step was rapid and nervous, like that of a person who was on an anxious errand, and yet fearful that it might fail of its end.

This stranger was Adolph Marina, a fruit and spice merchant of Florence. He had been in business many years, and amassed a fortune. But he was a miser, and eagerly longed for more money. His shop was on the *Quay l'Arno.* Here, under cover of his traffic in the customary wares of his calling, he was a silent and secret partner in the guilty brigandage of stealing, the buying and selling little Italian children. He had branch establishments in Pisa, Leghorn, and other ports on the Mediterranean. There were parties allied with this wicked man in different portions of the United States of America. The captain and padrone were their active agents.

Signor Adolph Marina! He passed for a nice gentleman — a very nice gentleman — among those who did not know his real character, on the Florence Merchants' Exchange. An equally nice lady — a very nice lady — was signora Marina, the merchant's wife. She moved in some of the most fashionable Florentinian circles. Some there were who disliked to recognize her social equality. But they were accustomed to school themselves to civility in her company, on account of the

favors the business of her husband was capable of affording to their gay festivals and parties of pleasure.

The Marina family lived in style, near the old cathedral *Duomo di Santa Maria.* Here, in large apartments overlooking the commercial part of the river, the husband and wife dwelt in a solitary grandeur. They were surrounded by many works of art. But it was easy for the practised eye to see that they were works that had all, or nearly all, been saved by salvage from the wrecked fortunes of their neighbors. Statues and pictures of rare skill and great value stood here and there, and hung carelessly on the antiquated walls, which gave indubitable evidence of having adorned some ancient palace or garden, whose proprietors had gone into earth, or insolvency, and their estates into decay and ruin.

Here, among these diverse relics of pawnbroking splendor, like poisonous spiders in their dens, the two rich sharpers plotted deeply for plunder and profit. In the day-time they bought and sold the rich fruits of Italy, mingled with occasional works of art. At night their dealings were with Italian parents and children — buying and selling the little ones, like cattle in the shambles. When not visiting some gay *salon,* or fashionable theatre, circus, or concert hall, they received their guests with a richness of reception, a gaiety of style, that was replete with the warm geniality of the Italian court. All the while they were planning how they might add to their ill-gotten gains, at the expense of some ruined family circle. The unprotected children of Tuscany, Etruria, and Piedmont, and even of more distant parts, were constantly laid under contribution by these adepts in guile.

So cunningly did they pursue their vocation, that the

civil authorities were thrown off their guard. Many a noble visitor passed through the Marina parlors, and traversed the adjacent grounds of the establishment, without being at all aware of the business that was carried on in secret by the proprietors.

Alas! the strong webs of these human tarantulas, and of others like them, were not confined to Florence, or even to Italy. They reached across the wide waters of the ocean to the far-off shores of America. Many a heart was at that moment aching in its American wanderings, that had been poisoned from the den of the Marinas. The earnings of many an Italian child-life came back to that den from the purlieus of the cities of America; leaving the plundered parents and children to suffer and mourn without redress. The money dropped into the dirty box or cup, or the still dirtier hand of the Italian padrone, who dragged his stolen children along with his organ, or other instrument, through American thoroughfares, found its way almost invariably into the gilded coffers of some Italian merchant, speculator or child-procurer, who dwelt in luxury, idleness and dissipation at home. The poor half-starved children earned the money. The padroni and their accomplices squandered much on themselves. The rich child-hunters pocketed the chief plunder.

Mrs. Marina was the cashier of the Marina firm. She kept the safe of money as well as the house. The key of the strong box was always in her hands. She took good care that no one but herself and her guilty partners should know how it was accumulated and how it was disposed of. She had very few intimate friends. It was not surprising that Mr. and Mrs. Garcia should be of the number. They had learned to know her. She had quickly learned them. When,

therefore, signor Marina abruptly entered this conference at the *Mansion di Lapo*, he was welcomed warmly by Mrs. Garcia, as an expected guest. Both the captain and the padrone greeted him as an ally, whose skill and facilities were quite indispensable.

Mr. and Mrs. Ferenza and Lorette looked on the interview with suspicion. They saw that it was evidently pre-arranged. Lucia, with her coquettish and fickle airs, was soon tired of the whole scene, and heartily wished it was well over. She languished idly in her seat, and longed to be dressed in her gayest attire, again on the streets or piazzas of Florence, tambourine in hand, to shake its tiny bells to the music of her captivating voice, to be followed, flattered and admired.

The trinity of iniquity,—the captain, the padrone, and the merchant,—or, rather, the quartette of deceivers, for the artful Mrs. Garcia must be included here—watched every movement of both these Italian families. The captain put on his most cunning smile, that flitted over his face under the secret impulses of deception that were at the moment fluttering in his heart. The padrone was humming a low popular air, as if he were mentally calculating how its notes, in the voices of these two children, could be most rapidly and most safely coined into money for his own purse. The merchant kept casting furtive glances from one object to another, as if searching for approaching danger and the easiest avenues of escape. Mrs. Garcia sat at her ease in her fanciful chair, evidently feeling that she was mistress of the whole situation.

It required but a few moments to divulge the plan of campaign. The padrone was introduced as a gentleman soon to depart for America. In his most oily

tones the captain descanted on his mission. The merchant came forward, just in the nick of time, to announce, with great pleasure, that all the details of the voyage had been carefully arranged in advance. The trio had called to consummate the business in the most agreeable manner possible. The contracts were to be binding on the parents and children, and extend for three years from date.

First of all — complete possession of the two daughters was to be signed and sealed to the padrone. They were to accompany him to America; remain always with him in that country; and follow his footsteps and his fortunes as street singers and musicians.

They were parentally and as chattels bound, by authority of the merchant, who was also a civil magistrate. That benevolent gentleman had kindly assumed all the trouble and expense of transportation across the ocean. Hence, all the earnings of the children were to pass through his hands, as a matter of security, until his kindness was all repaid. It would be such a bother to have these stipends remitted to the four parents, that the generous merchant, with his equally generous wife to assist him, would manage that little matter of business — being, as everybody knew, an accomplished and successful business man — without the least difficulty in the world. Mrs. Garcia was to be the domestic agent for the two families; and, of course, she would manage that all right.

The padrone, in short, was to be the all-in-all to the children in America. They were, in fact, to be regarded as his personal property, his child-vassals, his bonded goods and chattels. All they earned was his. Nothing was to come to their parents, except by his knowledge and permission; and even that had to pass through

the palms of the merchant Marina and his shrewd cashier, his wife.

When this whole scheme was developed, there was an ominous silence in that quaint old room in the *Mansion di Lapo.* Not a word was spoken for some moments. The parties sat around the ancient knightly table, one of the artistic relics of the venerable place, silently looking at each other. The light of the moon, that had now risen, full-orbed, over the dark waters of the Arno, streamed down into the room through the lofty Florentinian window that yet graced the stuccoed wall. Mrs. Garcia, who sat where the beams fell full upon her face, revealing the art that reigned over every feature, and the tact with which she had arrayed herself for the occasion, was the first one of the party to lead off the conversation.

With her own consummate skill she adapted every look, word, and gesture to its intended mission. It was in a moment seen that she was most desperately in earnest.

"For *my* part," said she, with a flippant toss of her giddy head, that was well-nigh inimitable, "*I* believe every word these gentlemanly visitors have told us. Certainly, they are very, *very* kind to make us such generous offers. To be sure, as for the matter of that, it 'll be desperate hard for *me* to part with *my* dear, *dear* Lucia!"

As she spoke, a look in a certain direction gave proof that she did not regard the opinions and wishes of her husband of much account, any way.

There was money to be made; and that was all she cared for.

"These good friends," she continued, "know all about what is best—a great deal better than *we* do.

There's the gentlemanly padrone," she exclaimed, vivaciously, and glancing pertly toward that chief of the hunters; "*he*, of course, will personally be all the time with the children, and will be sure to see that everything goes as merry as a marriage-bell. The merchant, signor Marina, we all know, is immensely rich. Certainly he will make it sure that nothing in his department goes wrong. And then, there's his beautiful and accomplished lady, the signora! Such a pattern of piety and devotion as she is, will place our incomes beyond a doubt — of course she will! Let us settle this little affair at once, and be done with it!"

Pausing a moment in triumph, she nodded her artificial head-gear, and sailed out of the room — like a victorious ship-of-war leaving port with all colors flying.

It was to her a carnival of vanity, avarice and conquest. The padrone, the captain and the merchant gave her sundry expressive glances as she moved away. There was a moment of still more expressive silence.

Mr. and Mrs. Ferenza, with their Lorette beside them, were the only persons in the room who looked as they felt — sad and sorrowful at heart. They alone acted with the natural sympathy becoming the scene. Their surprise gradually gave way to anguish, that partly found its final vent in tears. But, alas! on the side of their oppressors there was power; and they had no helper. They could only weep, and sigh, and—submit.

Glancing furtively at each other, the three child-hunters withdrew silently from the room. Mrs. Garcia immediately beckoned to her husband and Lucia. They both at once responded, and together all passed out.

Mr. and Mrs. Ferenza were now left alone with the chief commercial plotter — captain del Paso. That arch-villain understood his part well, and instantly

proceeded to perform it. He began with smiles and promises, gradually proceeding to threats and appeals to the fears of his unprotected victims. Full well he knew that they were completely in his power — as many similar Italian parents had been before, and as many more will be after them.

When the child-hunter left that lonely and silent room in Florence, these parents and their child were bound, hand and foot, like cattle for the shambles.

CHAPTER III.

THE FEAST OF THE HUNTERS.

The love of gold, that meanest, blindest rage,
And darkest folly of man's fleeting age,
Which, rarely venturing in the van of life,
While nobler passions wage their heated strife,
Comes skulking in, with selfishness and fear,
And dies collecting lumber in the rear.

Moore.

A TAP at the door. It was one of the servants of the merchant Marina, announcing that signora Marina awaited him at home.

Mr. Ferenza answered to the call that the signor had but just left the *Mansion di Lapo*. It was not known whither he had gone.

The padrone, Marco Vincens, the valet was further informed, had left in company with his master.

The servant retired, and returned at once directly to the house of signor Marina. As he anticipated, the signor was already there. The two had passed each other unnoticed on the way.

The great parlor of the merchant was brilliantly lighted, and there was music in the hall. The flashing glass chandeliers sent out their radiance across the quay and over the waters of the Arno. The great stream slept in the silent darkness beyond, as the gentle night winds blew softly over it, and the rippling waves dashed idly against the massive stone piers.

On entering the house to report the result of his mission to his imperious mistress, he observed that not only was his master present, but that several other persons were with him.

By previous appointment, the party was composed of padrone Vincens, captain del Paso, and Mrs. Marguerite Garcia. Manuel Garcia was *not* there. His place was deftly supplied by signora Marina, who was resplendent in silks and diamonds. Her aim was to be the shining light of the evening. She had quickly learned from her husband what had been done — and "well done," as she said — at the *Mansion di Lapo.* It was a bouncing triumph of her diplomacy.

Now came the echoes of her victory over the oppressed children of Italy, from the apex of her delectable mountains. They rang and trilled around the parlors and halls of the Marina castle on the *Quay l'Arno.* The gay scene was replete with the adroit hilarity of my lady of the hour. Her dark plot had succeeded. The money was sure to come from the generous Americans. Her share, as silent partner and cashier of the firm of child-hunters, MARINA, WIFE & COMPANY, was to be — all she saw fit to make it. The dashing signora, therefore, was supremely happy. The child-hunt was a success!

One peculiar pleasure of the signora was that there were some details of the plot yet to be finished. On these she was to ply her practised hand. To perfectly complete them, would be the consummation of her happiness.

Soft lounges and luxurious divans were ranged around the spacious apartments. The whole company were soon at their ease. All felt that a smart thing had been done, and they were bound to enjoy it.

The preliminaries to the concluding arrangements were soon to be dispatched. Avarice is a passion that illy brooks delay.

The children hunted for had been caught. They had been bound in strong toils for the market. The human goods and chattels were at once to be duly delivered and consigned to their legal owners.

"Welcome, my guests!" said signora Marina, as the company filed into the sumptuous apartments to the sound of dancing music. "This is the hour and power of our joint triumph. Let us all enjoy it together! It's a glorious night for the *Quay l'Arno!* Eh! signor Marina?"

"Decidedly so, signora. This is one of those rare occasions where pleasure and profit go hand in hand. It is profitable to know, in advance, that our pleasure is all paid for by others! By the way, Del Paso,—ah! pardon me, signor, I should have addressed you as 'brave captain,'—that was a cool and consummate stroke of policy in you, so quickly to capture not only the child Lorette, but her father and mother, too."

"Do you think so, signor?" responded the captain, with a cunning chuckle. "Oh, that was easy enough done!"

"How's that?" asked the signor.

"Oh, the moment I was alone with them, I had them. What promises didn't do, threats did. These poor people of Italy, especially those in dependent callings, are all of them living next door to slavery. Only a thin partition between."

"That's so!" responded the signor. "And that's the way it ought to be. The chattels of labor have no right to be anything else but chattels themselves!"

"*Quien sabe!* as the Spaniards have it," continued

the captain, with a shrug. "Can't say as to that. I 'm a poor man myself, and therefore speak and act as a poor man. *You* are a rich man, signor Marina, and can hardly be expected to feel for the poor."

"Listen to the music, captain!" cried the signor, raising his voice.

"This way — this way all!" suddenly interrupted signora Marina, as the band struck up a lively Italian air. "Here is the throne of *my* dominion, signor Marina — if you please — *I* reign here by royal right!"

"Nay, my regal mistress," replied Marina, "we are joint occupants of the throne. *I* will unite with you in the edicts, and you, as my fellow sovereign, shall see that they are obeyed. Alberti!" he continued, addressing one of the servants, "our best Tuscan wines first; next our oldest cogniac brandy."

"So you believe in progress, do you, signor?" inquired the captain, archly.

"Yes," responded the merchant. "But what am I to understand by the question?"

"I mean," said the captain, "that you are going on from weak wine to strong brandy."

"The stronger the better!" muttered between his teeth the padrone, as he quaffed his full bumper of cogniac.

"My blessing on you all, my dear children!" exclaimed signora Marina, with a significant leer.

"If you please, signor," added the captain, making a low obeisance to the host, and a still lower one to the hostess, "I will take some of both kinds; then I shall know, by a happy experience, which I like best."

"We hope you will like both equally well, gallant commander," lisped the signora, with her sweetest

tones and condescending curtesy. "Our little entertainment is made mainly on your account. We are more indebted to you, captain, for the success of this capture of these fine children, than to any one else. No liquor is too choice, no viand too rich, no regalia too elegant for the captain del Paso."

"You honor me overmuch, beautiful signora," responded the captain, laying his hand on his breast, and making his most gallant bow. "Do you forget that if you assign me the lion's share of the hunt, I shall expect the lion's share of the prey?"

Signora Marina was silent. Padrone Vincens, ever on the alert, had overheard the sly hint, and recognized its hidden meaning with a savage scowl.

The merchant, who entered the circle at that moment, and who had also caught the captain's threat, looked furtively and meaningly at his wife, as he added in an undertone:

"Remember, my mistress, that *you* are the treasurer of this concern!"

Raising his voice, he cried:

"Now for cards and songs!"

"Signora Marina's song!" echoed all the invited guests.

The accomplished receiver of this drunken gang of child-thieves made haste to obey the call. It was the quickest way of relieving herself of obstreperous importunity. She sank majestically into the soft seat at her magnificent piano. There was not a grander one in all Italy—not in princely halls or royal palaces. Right regally did signora Marina sing and play. She was inspired alike by flattery, wine and conquest. The unprotected offspring of her poor Italian neighbors were lying at that moment at her feet, and she felt

that she was trampling upon them, as she did upon the lamb-skin rug on her gorgeous carpet.

It was far on in the early morning when that convivial party broke up. With clapping hands and lusty cheers they cried to one another across the empty bottles and glasses, and among the wild strains of the band:

"Long live Italy! Long live the United States of America! Long live the children to be hunted; and long live we to hunt them!"

CHAPTER IV.

THE BEREAVED HOME.

Go when the hunter's hand hath wrung
From forest cave her shrieking young,
And calm the lonely lioness —
But mock, oh! mock not my distress!

Giaour.

FAR different was the scene that transpired that bacchanalian night in the classic old room of the Ferenzas. The little family of father, mother and daughter had spent all the hours in a state of anxiety bordering on despair.

Their guests had departed, and left them to solitude and silence. They retired to their lonely beds — but alas! not to repose. The dark shadows of an Italian night gathered densely around them, and brooded in the vapors of the river on the *Mansion di Lapo*. One by one the public vehicles passed from the main thoroughfares. Here and there a private carriage rolled along to and from its place of destination. The doors of the theatres and halls of amusement were all closed. The lamps of the streets and squares burned dimly through the cold and thick night air. The verandas were in darkness, and only here and there a flickering taper glimmered through the closed blinds of the dwelling-houses of Florence. Every shop had shut up its doors, locked its gates, and barred its windows. The solitary watchmen paraded their rounds

with a slow and measured tread, as if fearful of disturbing the slumbers of the innocent citizens, or of preventing their detection of such villains as hopes of plunder had led out into the gloom. Beneath low archways, and along the edges of secluded passages, might be seen mysterious lazzaroni, clad in heavy cloaks, to shield them from the dampness of the night, as they kept their vigils of guilt in their haunts of crime.

Beside the little table in the centre of the room on which rested the guitar of Lorette, a dim lamp was burning on the mantel. A beautiful picture of the great artist, the founder and architect of the noble mansion, looked out from its frame on the wall, as if the artist himself would come in the shadows of his former home to commiserate the sorrows of these poor Italians he had left behind.

All through that sleepless night, the Ferenza family had spent the weary hours in talking to one another of the scenes that had just transpired among them. Their minds were still in the dreamy shadows of superstition. They had received some light by the christian influences that had begun to permeate some parts of Italy; but they could only discern the truth imperfectly —like the blind slowly recovering their sight, only enough to see men as trees walking.

Like many other Italian families, it was almost wholly dependent on the caprices of fashion, or the uncertainties of foreign demand and supply. By the sudden fading of flowers, or by the still more disastrous spread of frosts, or the blight of arid miasma, all their little gains might perish in a day or night. All they had earned by the care of a whole season in the garden, might wither and die in an hour; so precarious is the calling of the humble and lowly florist of

Italy. How much do such families depend on their children! Among many of such circles, when the gifted and industrious children are gone, all is gone! But little is left but the crushed and bruised flower — without the odor and without the tint.

Thus crept the mists of the morning over that little family circle in the great and gay city of Florence.

Mrs. Ferenza, sick and feeble, had risen from her pillow, still wet with tears. She had groped her tottering way into the adjoining room, and set about preparing the scant repast of the family. She would not call her husband at that early hour, for she knew he needed all the rest he could possibly obtain, after having passed so weary and watchful a night, to fit him for the arduous duties of the day. Neither would she summon Lorette to her side, faint as she herself was at that moment, for she felt in her heart as if it might be her duty very soon to prepare a parting breakfast for her darling child.

There came to Mrs. Ferenza, in the gray of that Italian morning, a remembrance of the little American tract that her daughter had learned to read to her. It was a comfort to her bleeding heart. It told her of Jesus — of Jesus, the Man of Sorrows, the acquainted with grief. She was taught by that little messenger from far-off America, that her own countryman, the great Genoese sailor, had discovered centuries ago, how that same meek and lowly Saviour of the world had borne her griefs and carried her sorrows in His own body on the tree.

True, the pure light of practical christianity was only just dawning on that poor afflicted Italian woman's mind; but, faint as were its beams, it was a heavenly light, that brought healing and consolation on its wings.

There came to her mind, in that dark hour of trial, the sweet words of the Holy Bible:

'*That they should seek the Lord; if, haply, they might feel after Him, and find Him: though He be not far from every one of us.*'

At that moment there fell a soft step on the floor. She looked up quietly from her work. Her eyes met those of Lorette, who had stolen gently into the room.

"Why, Lorette, my child! What made you get up so early?" said the mother, in a tender voice.

"Oh! dear mother," replied Lorette, as she ran quickly up and kissed the waiting and trembling lips, "I have not slept good all night long. Every once in a while I heard you and papa mourning. At times I knew you were sobbing and weeping over me. How could I sleep? Often, through the night, I lifted my heart in prayer to God for us all. I felt that it was so cruel and hard in padrone Vincens and his partners to come and take me away from you and papa! But, mother dear, Jesus has taught me that His disciples should pray for our enemies, that they may not be so wicked, and that we should do good to those who persecute us and despitefully use us."

"That's a hard lesson to learn, my child," said the mother, still quietly pursuing her toil.

"I know it does seem a hard lesson, dear mother," Lorette replied, "but Jesus, the Great Teacher, will not only help us to learn it, but He will show us how to carry it into practice. Ah! mother, don't you remember I have read to you how much Jesus suffered Himself? We ought never to forget that it is Jesus who says to us:

'*Let not your heart be troubled. Ye believe in God; believe, also, in Me.*

'In my Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you.

'And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto Myself: that where I am there ye may be also.'"

The christian child had learned these consoling words of St. John, so that she could repeat them by heart. How tenderly and sweetly she now recited them to her bowed-down and weeping mother!

Then she took hold of the work her mother was doing, and helped her all she could. She continued to speak softly, and move carefully, because she was afraid of disturbing her father; for she knew how hard he would have to toil in his gardens during the day. She knew, too, that her mother would continue similar toil at home; but she thought that she could retire at intervals into her solitary bed-room, and there find a little rest. But, alas! her loving spirit also knew that the mother's heart would be aching, while the rest of her weary and worn body should be seeking repose.

In a few moments the father came in. He, too, had been unable to sleep. His eyelids looked heavy. All around his dark eyes was a rim of scarlet, plainly showing how much they had been burning with scalding tears; while beneath them both his bronzed Italian complexion wore a still deeper rim of shadows, that told too well how often the whole of that fond and faithful father's face had been throbbing with agony. He looked as if heavy blows had been struck beneath his eyes by a clinched hand. Alas! the blows from which the poor man suffered were on his heart. But they were not the blows of the sledge-hammer on the anvil. Hard as they were, and as often repeated, they

but made the heart of the Italian florist all the more tender.

That night of suffering had led that son of Italy nearer to his God. Ever and anon, as the dark hours stole on past midnight toward the misty dawn, he joined with his wife in prayer for help from on high. The two mourning hearts prayed together, as they never prayed before. Without the intervention of counted beads, having no crucifix near them, as they knelt on the humble floor beside the lowly bed, no madonna picture before them, and no incense burning in the narrow room, they poured their whole souls in supplication to the Almighty Father. They prayed in child-like faith, nothing doubting, as the precious words of Jesus came into their memories:

'*But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father who is in secret; and thy Father, who seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly.*'

So Giovanni and Angela Ferenza had prayed that night in Florence. So had the Heavenly Father rewarded them there.

Both mother and daughter welcomed the father with surprise. He came in with a soft tread and a sad look.

His story was the same as theirs — a sleepless night; silent watches of grief, broken only by sobs, sighs and the voice of secret prayer.

"Let me join in helping you," said Mr. Ferenza, in a low tone of voice; "I see that neither one of you is able to do anything. I am far from strong myself, this morning; but I have more strength than you both put together. There is a great trial before us —"

"Oh!" exclaimed Mrs. Ferenza, laying down the article in her nervous hand, and dropping spasmodically into

the nearest seat. "How *can* we bear it? I fear it will kill me; I am so weak and feeble already."

"Dear mother, don't say so. Hear what the good God says to us. Here it is in my little Bible, that the lady from America gave me. Let me read it to you, from the Book of Psalms," said Lorette.

'*Because thou hast made the Lord, which is my refuge, even the Most High, thy habitation,*

'*There shall no evil befall thee; neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling.*'

"Ah!" interrupted Mrs. Ferenza, in a paroxysm of grief she could not control, "*I am* not afraid of the plague, or the pestilence, or any evil of that kind. I am afraid of that wicked padrone, coming to steal away my child!"

The poor woman sobbed aloud, as if her heart would break.

"Oh! it is dreadful!" resumed Lorette, glancing her fine eyes, rapidly overflowing with tears, from father to mother, as she spoke. "But, then, how comforting to us are the words that God speaks to us here in the rest of this Psalm:

'*For He shall give His angels charge over thee, to keep thee in* ALL *thy ways.*'"

Sweet child! How beautiful it was to see her ministering such words of comfort to her father and mother, while her own young and tender heart was aching to its core!

She knew it was mainly on her own account that her loving parents were enduring all this great sorrow. She felt more for them than she did for herself. She had gone farther than they had in the faith of the ever-present Christ. While, therefore, as a dutiful child, she comforted her parents with words sent from Heaven,

these other heavenly words came to her own soul, from the same Book of Psalms:

'*When my father and my mother forsake me, then the Lord will take me up.*'

True, her father and mother had not forsaken her. Far from it. They could and would never do that. But they were literally to be torn asunder; and there was then no helper near. There was at that time no law on the statute-books of Italy or America to prevent this unchristian and inhuman separation of parents and children by the cruel system of padronism.

The home of the Ferenzas was indeed a bereaved one. Alas! how many more such homes are there in Italy to-day!

Not alone in Florence; not alone in Naples; not alone in even once proud Rome; but all over the fair land of Italia, from the rivers to the plains, from the mountains to the sea, at this very moment there is going up to heaven the cry of hundreds and thousands of captive children:

"Save us, oh! save us, from the bloody hands of the Italian padroni!"

CHAPTER V.

BOUND TO AMERICA.

He who ruleth the raging of the sea, knoweth, also, how to check the designs of the ungodly.

I submit myself, with reverence, to His holy will. O, Abner! I fear my GOD; and I fear none like HIM.

Racine.

THE time had now come for Lucia and Lorette to bid farewell to their dear native Italy. The hunters had caught them in their toils, and were about to take them, bound captives, across the wide waste of waters.

The poor children were all ready for the voyage. But ah! how little did they know or think of what was before their young lives in that distant land!

Mrs. Garcia, as might well be expected, still continued to treat the subject in all its bearings with characteristic flippancy. On one point alone was she deeply interested — the secure completion of the business arrangements, by which the earnings of the child should be secured to her, in their due proportion. She had frequent consultations with her fellow-hunters, the captain, the padrone, and the merchant. Nothing was left undone on her part, or theirs, to make the bondage of the children complete, and their hard earnings secure to their betrayers — excepting, of course, the spare little pittance that was to be doled out to the Ferenzas.

Mrs. Ferenza, like Rachel of old, refused to be comforted. It seemed to her that, with all the specious

wiles of the captain, and all the promises of the merchant and the padrone, her child was lost. The journey of Lorette looked to her like that long one from which she would never return. With a heavy heart she set about the necessary preparations. It was but little she could do to finish the scanty wardrobe of the young traveller.

When the time came for the vessel to set sail from the neighboring harbor of Leghorn, it was arranged that the two mothers should accompany the emigrants. The fathers and the rest of the families were to remain at home.

It was a calm and beautiful day, such as is seldom seen elsewhere to so fine advantage as in Italy. Never did the soft Italian climate seem more lovely and inviting. The two girls were dressed in suitable travelling attire — Lucia bearing her pet tambourine, Lorette her favorite guitar. The former had given sundry extra touches to her wavy black curls. Her jaunty hat sat with more than usual style on her head, which she tossed to and fro with an air of careless indifference. The latter had added a few wreaths of floral taste to her neat apparel, and looked as sweet and charming as the morning. A neat blue cape, which her mother gave her at parting, hung on her lovely shoulders, and a bouquet of choice flowers, bestowed by her father, shed a soft fragrance all around her.

The early train for Leghorn found the little party on the way to the ship. At Pisa they were joined by another company of similar juvenile emigrants, also bound to America — the whole being in close charge of padrone Vincens. Most of the children were boys, coming from the surrounding country. The bronzed faces of all of them showed that they had been accus-

tomed to toil in the open air. All of them were silent in the cars. An undefinable look of dread was in their eyes. Every gesture and motion betokened a fear of something in the future for which they had not been prepared. They were all going away from home,— not as regular emigrants, aware, beforehand, of the line and object of their voyage,— not as children in family groups, accompanied by their parents and guardians,— but as unwilling captives, bound in heavy fetters to a hard and thankless task. The whole crowd looked out of the car-windows with novel stares at the scenes they saw for the first time. Their Italian homes were behind them. Before them was the great unknown world. Beyond were the hills and valleys through which they had loved to roam. Beside them flowed the waters of the familiar Arno. In the distance, across the track, was the bay of Leghorn, where the pennons of the ships fluttered in the breeze that came up from the Mediterranean Sea. On one of these strange vessels they were all to embark for a distant land. All of them, without an exception, had their instruments of music, which they handled with a tenderness and care it was touching to behold. It was like a coffle of bond slave-children, hugging the chains that bound them.

It was but a short ride from Pisa to Leghorn. The eyes of the whole company were soon transferred from the wonders of the tall, leaning tower that has rendered the former place so memorable, to the forests of masts, rigging and sails that loomed up from the quay of the latter. All was surprise and excitement; but they were the excitement and surprise of nervous anxiety rather than of pleasure. The tremulous question arose in their young hearts, though they feared to give that

or any other expression on their childish lips — which of these queer-looking things will take us over the wide waters? Then came that other question — who will care for us on the voyage, since we must all leave fathers and mothers behind? Who will watch over us in America?

All was doubt, all was uncertainty to this young Italian brood, thus hurried away from kindred and country.

The tongue of land on which the city of Leghorn is situated runs far down towards the sea beyond. How wide and deep and vast that water looked, as these little wanderers peered out over it! The waves of the inner sea were the same that our Lord and His Apostles had traversed nearly two thousand years ago; but these groups of young immortals knew but little of the glorious Redeemer who died to save them. They saw the long modern walls of a large town; the bustle of crowded streets; the lines of vessels at the quay and at anchor in the bay; and gazed up with wonder at the five strong gates of the city they had never seen before. On one side towered the grand cathedral, so recently begun; on the other, the more modest churches of the Greeks; and scattered here and there the ornate synagogues of the Jews.

The gigantic mole, or wharf, built to protect the commerce of Leghorn, was a prodigious work in the eyes of these children. From the sides of this vast structure they were about to depart on their long voyage. Should they sail safely over the great, wide sea? What kind of a country was that to which they were going? Who would receive them there? How long would they have to stay? Would they ever come back, or see their fathers and mothers again?

Hunted, caught, imprisoned waifs! How little did they know what was before them!

For more than two hundred years past just such groups of the children of Italy had been carried away from Leghorn. For more than two hundred years other innocent boys and girls had been stolen away from Italian homes, and borne off by Italian child-hunters, in this worse than African slave trade, into far worse than Egyptian bondage.

Through all these by-gone centuries the offspring of other Italian parents had been the prey of child-traffickers to supply the human shambles of Vienna, Berlin, Paris, St. Petersburg and London. Now, for more than half a century this inhuman trade had been opened with the United States of America. Even men and women of Italian birth could and can be found so hard-hearted as to be ready and willing to carry it on for the sake of gain.

Among all the questions that came into the minds of this cargo of young children, bound for America that day from Italy, there was one question they could not answer — When shall this infernal child-hunting come to an end?

Who shall answer this question, in the name of Italy and humanity?

On the quay at Leghorn, Vincens had led his fettered emigrants, like a flock of sheep hurried to the markets. Like a driver of cattle, the padrone moved among them wielding a whip, which, though invisible to mortal eyes, sank into the very souls of those helpless children. They were huddled together hastily and driven on board. Here the narrow deck received them; and, immediately after, their still narrower quarters in a part of the hold below. It was like a floating pen of

chattels; a prison moving on the water crammed with fettered slaves.

"Let the brats take as little space as possible," muttered the child-merchant Marina to the padrone, as the two walked down together on the quay. "I want to get as many as I can in each vessel."

"Trust me for that," the padrone replied: "I'll pack them as close as sardines in a box."

"Ha! ha! ha!" chuckled the merchant. "Sardines—yes! That will do! Sardines are very good, when well packed."

"The closer the better," rejoined Vincens. "And the stronger the pickle that holds them," he coolly added.

"By the way, Vincens," interrupted Marina, "how are you off for another kind of liquor for your voyage?"

"Oh!" quickly replied the padrone, "your signora has supplied me with a quantity of her choice selection. But as you know I have partners to treat on board ship, and will have more of the same thing to do when we land in America, I should be glad of other cases of the same sort."

"You would, padrone?"

"Most certainly I would, signor."

"But will you promise me, if I add to your supply, while the vessel is waiting in the stream, that you will not submit your cases too freely to the handling of captain del Paso, when he comes on board?"

"Yes, signor. I know well the habits of the hardy sailor; and I promise you I will keep your most tempting liquors out of his hands."

"Noble captain!" cried the child-merchant, with a sneer. "But remember about the food allowance for

our brat-consignment. Not an ounce of meat, not a scale of fish, not a flake of bread, is to be wasted. Mark me, Vincens! not a solitary one. And as for clothing,—why, rags are good enough for such off-scourings as these."

"All right," muttered the padrone, between his clinched teeth. "I understand. Send down the cases of liquor by the last boat that comes from the quay to the ship. Our '*noble* captain,' as you call him, will return ashore by that time to get his papers from the custom-house."

"Good!" ejaculated the merchant. The two men parted at the gangway of the ship.

The parents of Lucia and Lorette had made such scanty provision as was in their power for the voyage of their children. They were few, indeed, and very poor at that. The vessel was to be crowded with emigrants; and what could their two little girls do among so many?

Their clothes were just narrowly trimmed. Cheap ornaments were supplied for their wrists, their bosoms, necks and throats. A small supply of beads and crucifixes was mixed in with the clothing bundles. But there was not a Bible among them all.

Lorette still retained the copy of the New Testament, printed in Italian, her American gift, which she had already learned to read and love so well.

Such was the outfit of these young musical emigrants, for their far-away field in America. Thus were they equipped in Italy for their future toilsome roamings through the streets, alleys and grounds of distant American cities and villages. It was in such garbs, and after such trainings, these two little unknowns were to thread their devious walks in the future,—to

play their Italian music, and sing their Italian songs, to wander, suffer, sicken and die.

And for what? To pick up scattered pittances from the hands of strangers, thrown from strange windows and doors to the pavements and gutters.

And for whom? For the greedy child-hunters of Italy and America.

What wonder that such children should be often led astray? What else could be expected than that their unpractised feet should get entangled in the thick briars of their narrow and crooked paths? Is it strange that such unprotected waifs should be deceived and betrayed by the artful and designing?

They come to America from their ignorant and superstitious homes in Europe. They land in the midst of a jostling crowd. Strange faces greet their eyes. Strange sounds fall on their ears. They know not what to think of our dress; they know not how to conform to our customs. What temptations are they under to learn, first, the language of wickedness? Among such mobs of the dissolute and the vile, what danger is there that these weak wanderers to our shores should be tramped under foot!

In this surging mass of wayward humanity were now Lucia and Lorette. They were yet tossed to and fro in Italy, ere they had set sail for America. The mothers of the children had accompanied them to Leghorn. Mrs. Garcia soon turned away from Lucia, on a frivolous pretence; but the mother of Lorette went with her dear child on board the ship. Here they clung to each other, like the parent tree and the entwining vine. The mother readjusted the apparel of her child ever and anon. She took off and put on her Tuscan hat repeatedly; she twined her fingers in the glossy

curls that hung around the neck; and kissed the soft and ruby lips that were so often and so readily presented to her own. When their cheeks met each other, their tears mingled in kindred currents upon them; and the parting sighs of the parent blended with responsive sighs of the child. The parting hour had come; and oh! how full of sadness!

Mrs. Garcia, after a secret interview with the captain del Paso, who was in an apartment adjoining the rear office in the store of signor Marina, receiving visits from nearly all the emigrants in private, came tripping down among the noisiest of the crowd. She was dressed in her gayest attire, and her aim had been that Lucia should rival her in gayety. She bustled around among the emigrants and the friends who had come to see them off, attracting constant attention by her bold and dashing manner. She made herself familiar, at once, with the officers and crew of the ship; and her thoughtless laugh rang out among the wild men and giddy women and children on the pier.

Then followed a long and confidential interview between Mrs. Garcia and padrone Vincens. Further and most minute particulars of their bargain for Lucia were reconsidered and rearranged. Every item of the child-traffic was settled in the most business-like style. The child had been caught in the net, held in the hands of the parent, on one side, and of the padrone, on the other. It was a profitable bargain and sale to both parties. What mattered it if the child-victim fluttered in the net? It was strong enough to carry her across the ocean, to hold her in its toils in America! Would it bring her back again to Italy? That remains for us to see.

Mrs. Ferenza still clung to Lorette. She folded her

maternal arms lovingly around the slender waist of her child, who, in return, leaned equally lovingly on the gentle bosom where she had nestled when a helpless little babe. Soft, and tender and tearful were the simple instructions that fell from the warm lips of that Italian mother into the listening ears of that Italian child.

Lucia held in her hand her well-worn American tract. The light of the Bay of Leghorn fell on its humble pages, and revealed, in the Italian language, this title:

"COME TO JESUS."

It was one of many similar tracts circulated in Italy and adjacent countries by good christian people in America and England. It contained only four small pages. Its frontispiece was a picture of our Saviour hanging on the cross. It was the same old, old story of Jesus and His love. In clear, full, plain words, it told all about Jesus. It closed with a sweet and earnest invitation to the reader, in every part of the world where the Italian language is known and read, whether on the land or on the water, to come to Jesus and be made happy. It pointed to His bleeding side for the fountain of salvation; and to His outstretched arms, spread upon the cross so wide as to embrace the world.

This was the motto of the little tract:

'By grace are ye saved, through faith; and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God.'

Its only theme was the salvation of man by the cross of Christ. *'God so loved the world,'* it said, *'He gave His only begotten Son; that whosoever believeth on Him might not perish, but have eternal life.'*

"Oh, sinner!" continued this brief messenger, with an Italian tongue, "take the loving JESUS at His true

and unchanging word. Come to JESUS; and thou shalt be saved. Even though thou art the chief of sinners, JESUS can and will save thee, and HE alone."

"None but JESUS, none but JESUS,
Can do helpless sinners good."

"One there is, above all others,
Well deserves the name of friend;
His is love beyond a brother's,
Precious, free, and knows no end."

Then immediately followed the inviting words of Christ Himself:

'*Whosoever cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out.*'

All these, and many other kindred and saving truths of the gospel, had been printed for this poor Italian woman in the land that her countryman had discovered ages ago. They had come to her from that land like the gospel, without money and without price. How sweetly did those truths of that gospel sound to that child of Italy, in a spot only a few short miles from where the manger, and the cross and the sepulchre had once stood!

That poor woman, sick and wayworn, ignorant and superstitious as she was, received that humble messenger through her dear child. She read the message. It reached her heart. She believed. She came to Jesus. She was saved.

In less than an hour after this parting scene closed, the vessel bearing the two children and their associates was on its way to America. With the colors of Italy flying at the main-topmast truck, and those of the United States of America at the fore, she steered gallantly down Leghorn Bay, and far out toward the sea.

Mrs. Garcia, who had been standing by the side of Mrs. Ferenza on the quay, was now accosted by a private messenger from the business office of the merchant Marina, which stood near the shore of the harbor. A secret message was whispered in her ear. She started a moment with surprise, and then answered the messenger by an expressive nod. Immediately after she passed up the quay. By a sign from Marina, given at his office window, she continued her journey to the eastern porch of the grand Duomo cathedral — being built somewhat in imitation of that at Florence. In this porch she met another secret child-hunter, who had been watching, unobserved, the departure of the ship for America. In the dark shadows of the cathedral the man and woman talked confidentially together, and then both disappeared out of sight.

Mrs. Ferenza, wrapped in silent thought, still lingered on the extreme end of the quay. She had placed herself on a coil of chain cables, near a large stone pillar, that she might keep the outward-bound ship in sight as long as possible. The winds, also outward-bound, blew their blasts above and around her; but she heeded them not. The waves that bore her only child away rippled back with the flood tide, and mournfully dashed on the rocks at her feet; but their sound fell not on her ears. Her weak body was leaning tremulously on the rude stone post around which the chains were coiled that held the ships to the quay; but her aching heart was on the waters, floating out to sea.

How fast the sails and masts sank below the horizon! How soon the hull of the ship was out of sight! Still, as she looked so fondly and so earnestly, that sorrowing mother saw but one form in all the crowd on deck. Her eye fell on but one little girl, holding on the main

shrouds. She heard not one note of the sweet farewells that came to her from that distant bark; but she knew it was her own Lorette by the gentle waving of the childish hand, and the fluttering of the Florentine scarf on the sea air. Lorette, like her mother, was standing alone, and apart from all the rest. Silently and sadly the mother waved back an adieu to her daughter, and turned to walk slowly and feebly up the quay. The top of the cold pillar on which she had leaned was thickly wet with a mother's tears.

CHAPTER VI.

ARRIVAL IN NEW YORK.

The lamb, thy riot dooms to death, to-day,
Had he thy reason, would he skip and play?
Pleased, to the last, he crops the flowery food,
And licks the hand just raised to spill his blood.

Anon.

THE passage from Leghorn to New York was slow and tedious. The bark was a very dull sailer. She had been usually employed in transporting from Italy to America, in company with lots of emigrants, such cargoes of Mediterranean products as were not perishable. The captain was a part owner, with the child-merchant Marina, of both vessel and cargo; and knowing that everything on account of the transportation of passengers had been arranged on the starvation principle, while he himself was supplied with provisions and luxuries in plenty, he whiled away his time at his leisure. He sported at his own sweet will with the oldest of the girls who were imprisoned on shipboard, and kept completely in his power; compelling all the children to minister to his native love for fancy music.

The villain knew, by long experience, the secret purposes of his partner-owner and associates. What his passengers lacked in provisions, he was to make up by confinement and extortion. As soon as possible all on board but himself were put on short allowance. Hun-

ger and thirst were the first instalments of ocean suffering to our poor Italian children.

The padrone Vincens was now in supreme command of all the stolen company in his power. He immediately began to take every opportunity to show to them all how entirely he was their master. He made them come and go everywhere at his bidding. They were not allowed to have any free will of their own — not even to converse or play with one another, however privately, without his sovereign permission.

On all occasions they were commanded to call him "Master Vincens." They were everywhere and in everything to own him as such. He at once made them feel that they no longer belonged to themselves, or to their parents; that they were his goods and chattels, to all intents and purposes; purchased and paid for, at so much a head.

Lucia and Lorette were crowded, with the rest, into the dirty steerage. The floor was thickly covered with long accumulated filth. There were no chairs, or even stools, for sitting down to rest; every available inch of room being crowded full of cargo, or with the bags and chests in which had been crammed promiscuously the miserable duds of clothing worn by the boys and girls. The narrow bunks were built up like cattle-pens against the sides of the vessel, with no other bedding in them but knotty piles of dirty straw and heaps of foul manilla hemp, that had been clotted together, and packed down in hard lumps, by the emigrants of many voyages — a mass of stinking corruption that was never subjected to the strange ordeal of being changed or cleansed, or even turned over and shaken up. These were all the beds that Lucia and Lorette were permitted to lie in together. They had no choice for places of

repose but these half-putrid holes, or the still more putrid floor.

Some of these outcasts were even younger and more wretched than Lucia and Lorette. The little boys, especially, fared hard at the hands of the brutal Vincens. One boy, who was now almost sixteen, was held in peculiarly cruel bondage by the padrone. He was a lad of keen Italian wit; of much acquired intelligence. Vincens, therefore, watched him all the more closely, lest he might obtain influence over the other captives, and come to let them know something of their plundered rights.

One point was ever kept in view. On leaving Leghorn, the minds of all the children were deeply impressed with the idea that at no time, under no circumstances, were they to omit the superstitious rites by which they were bound. Not a crucifix should be left neglected; not a bead uncounted. Under penalty of losing the salvation of their souls, they were to pray for obedience to the padrone in all things.

This cunning scheme was to keep the poor helpless victims in still more abject subjection. It was by this slavish measure the children were made to feel that all their earnings in America did not and would not belong to themselves, or even to their parents, but to the padrone. What he did with their money, after it once came into his possession, they were never to know. They were all utterly terrified into complete submission. Their sickness, their nakedness, their hunger and thirst were as nothing, in comparison with their surrender of all they had, all they might hereafter have, to the control of the tyrant Vincens.

Such was the tyranny of these child-hunters. Such was the bondage of these hopeless children of Italy.

All the long voyage through, Vincens kept continually impressing on the pliant minds of his captives the lesson of his supreme power and of their implicit obedience. He was particularly careful in his severity with Lucia and Lorette. These two gifted dupes were held to be unusually valuable. Their talents for street performances were considered remarkable. Hence, there was money in them; and money was the one thing needful, and most to be cared for. Their pretty faces and agile motions, their sweet voices and rare accompaniments, were marketable commodities of great value, and should command the highest market prices. All these rich earnings, by his adroit management, were sure to go into his capacious and avaricious pockets. He had not hunted in vain in Italy for such choice game.

"See here," said the padrone, one day, on the great ocean, as he called Lucia and Lorette to his side. The little girls felt, in the solitude of the sea that hemmed them all around, how completely they were in his power. They mechanically sat down on the top of the black and begrimed chest on which Vincens was sitting, folded their trembling hands, bent their eyes submissively on the greasy planks below, and listened.

"See here, I say," continued Vincens. "Do you brats know that you both belong to me?"

The two children looked up at him simultaneously, as if neither of them understood what he meant.

"Oh! you need n't stare at me, that way. I 'll make you understand what I mean fast enough. I say, do you brats both know that you are now my property? that I own you, body and soul? that you must always go and come just when I tell you? that all you earn, every penny of it, belongs wholly to me? If you

have n't learned *that* fact, you 'd better begin to learn it, right away. Understand, eh?"

The children still looked surprised and terrified.

"You don't understand? Well, then, all I have to do is to beat it into you. Yes, I 'll rap it into your dull little noddles. You two young brats, Lucia Garcia and Lorette Ferenza, are now *my* children! You don't belong to yourselves, I told you; nor to your parents away back there in Florence; nor to anybody else. Henceforth, as we land in America, you belong to *me!* And I shall do what I will with *my own!* Understand now? Eh?"

Our poor waifs were silent. They sat dumb-founded in that dark and dank steerage, trembling all over from head to foot.

A dim light struggled down the narrow companion-way overhead. The children both looked up toward the lowering sea-sky, and on the rifted clouds that swept across the heaving waves, as if they would find some way of escape. But, alas! there was no escape for them. Their captivity was complete. No power on earth could then break their cruel bonds.

All at once, the padrone seemed to swell in their young eyes into the dimensions of a huge monster. He looked to them as if his hands had changed to the hairy claws of a lion, and his mouth appeared to open so wide that it would swallow them up. They shuddered, shrank away from his side, and began to cry most piteously.

Vincens looked at them with a sly and sullen leer. He saw, at a glance, that his vile purpose was already accomplished. With an ill-concealed chuckle, the villain rose up and went on deck.

The two little girls were utterly overcome. They

knew not what to do. Silence and weeping seemed their only relief, as they leaned back against their narrow and gloomy bunks and were rocked in their sadness by the wild sea waves.

At length Lorette thought of her American tract, which she had always continued to carry in her bosom. With a soft sigh of relief she drew it forth, and by the light of the steerage gangway she read aloud to herself and her companion the sweet injunction of the dear Christ:

'*Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not; for of such is the kingdom of heaven.*'

Lucia and Lorette had never yet wholly learned the full meaning of these blessed words of the immaculate Son of God. They had not then understood that, like all the other words of Jesus, they were intended not alone for the children of Judea, for the Hebrew and Gentile families that surrounded Him when He was on earth, but for all parents and all children on the face of the whole earth.

These little Florentine girls had not been brought up in the true nurture and admonition of the Lord. They had not yet seen or heard Christ, as He is revealed directly to all, with the eye and ear of christian faith. They had not understood how all His exceeding great and precious promises were intended to come directly to just such children as they were themselves. They had groped after Christ through the darkened mists of superstition; but they could not find Him, except in His own appointed way.

But now, on board this old Italian emigrant ship, drawing near the land more than three thousand miles away from home, sitting in the faint light that streamed down from heaven in the dark steerage upon them,

their young eyes and ears were opened, and their young hearts were touched as they had never yet been. Side by side they knelt down by the iron-bound and battered chest, and together they sent up to God the prayer —

'*Our Father who art in Heaven.*'

Who can doubt that their Heavenly Father heard that prayer? Who can doubt that He will always and everywhere hear and answer the prayer that all believing children offer to Him?

In a few days more the vessel was steering up the Naples-like bay of New York. Stopping the appointed time at quarantine, she passed on to her landing place at Castle Garden — the great depot for sea-emigrants from all quarters of the world.

Here padrone Vincens became more busy than ever. He had led his victims safely across the ocean. He was now ready to offer them for sacrifice and for filthy lucre on the altars of Mammon in America.

The whole group of passengers huddled like so many sheep, hurried from one pen to another. Each child, girls as well as boys, carried a bundle from the ship to the depot. These bundles contained their little all of clothing and memorials of their Italian homes. It was a very small bundle that each one was allowed to possess. Even that was to be taken away from them by the padrone, and kept in his own possession, after their depot examination should be passed. It was but precious little additional clothing those wandering tribes of Italy would ever have. All the money they could earn on these strange shores was to go into the grasping hands of the padrone, to be divided by him, at his own option, with the wicked merchant Marina, and still more wicked captain del Paso, who enslaved them in the far-off city of Florence.

This bad man, Vincens, began his career with these Italian children in America by telling them lies. He robbed them of their clothes, poor as they were, and of their hard-earned money, too. The child-hunter made the most of his game.

Vincens had been in New York before. He knew the city well. A part of his time had been spent there as the secret agent of a band of Italian robbers — belonging to sworn leagues of the child-hunters of Europe. The details of this system of robbery had been arranged for a long time. It was in constant operation both in Europe and America.

The padrone perfectly understood all its intricate and hidden workings. His associates were in almost every walk of life; and in some cases included persons in authority, and pursuing lawful callings, who were little suspected.

One of these kindred villains made his temporary home in New York. He moved on in his infernal mission unobserved; gathering his blood-stained gains in secret, and hoarding them here, that he might return to spend them with more freedom and more luxury among his kindred spirits in the old world.

This man's name was Gambrina — Bruta Gambrina. He was a few years younger than Vincens, but many years older in wickedness. He was at the landing of the Italian ship at Castle Garden, by appointment, to meet Vincens with his expected company of child-captives.

The meeting between the two was such as successful villains always give one another — hearty, cordial and boisterous. They stood together closely at the gate. Gambrina's black eyes swept lustfully and victoriously over the motley crowd that gathered around. Then

slapping Vincens violently on the shoulder, he cried to him, in exulting tones:

"Well done, Marco! Gloriously well done, my old boy!"

Vincens returned a look in which pleasure was toned down by caution, as he stolidly acknowledged the compliment.

The children had now been crowded into a mass behind a barricade of boxes and sacks. Here they hustled and jostled one another, until the two padroni pushed and drove them, like a frightened flock, into a dark and dingy corner of the old Castle. Here they were lodged under a temporary cover, not one of them daring to speak a word above a whisper.

Every one who had not seen him before was at once struck with the appearance of Gambrina. His face and form were even more forbidding than those of Vincens. His complexion was of the deepest sallow. His eyes were black as the blackest jet, and sank far deep in their cavernous sockets. His nose was large and coarse in its formation; and the mouth beneath pushed out from its dark mustache two large front teeth, like the short projecting tusks of a boar on the Tuscan mountains. Around both his large, glaring eyes, like the coil of a slimy black snake, were deep lines of discoloration, which beat and throbbed perceptibly, as the hot blood in the veins beneath the bronzed skin flooded or receded to and fro. A long, stiff, wiry mustache protruded over his distended mouth, the lower part of which drooped far down, as if to hide his boar-like tusks. The extreme ends of his mustache, wiry with wax, were twisted so hard that they looked like the twin fangs of an adder, ever ready to sting all who approached too near.

Gambrina was, indeed, a frightful creature — especially to stranger children. They all shrank from him as they would from a demon. Real innocence is ever conscious of the presence of guilt.

Vincens lost no time in telling his brood of poor little dupes that they would all be placed in the special charge of Gambrina. They were to follow him everywhere; to give heed slavishly to all he did and said; and to report to him submissively every day every penny they had earned.

The helpless waifs had slunk away to their corner barricade, and huddled down together on the thickly-clotted floor of Castle Garden. Here they lay shivering, while the two padroni marched triumphantly along the area in front, or paused only to laugh and chat with one another as they feasted on the rare viands and quaffed the choice liquors they had brought with them.

What a contrast to these deserted children with their distant homes in Italy! These homes could not boast of much elegance, or many luxuries. But they were real homes of little children, nevertheless. They had their cheerful thresholds, their genial hearth-stones, their lowly family altars. How strange and sad the difference in the foul purlieus, and jostling, profane crowds of Castle Garden!

Their voyage across the ocean had been one of abject suffering. They had no quiet, no rest, no healthful food, through all its weary days and nights. Marina had wickedly conspired with the captain of the bark and Vincens, as we have already seen, to subject the emigrants in their power to every possible privation. Money must be coined out of them, even though it should come, drop by drop, from their hearts' blood.

Bleeding Italy was thus to be made to pamper the lust and fashion of the heartless oppressors of mankind.

So, on what is called a christian shore, while these human vultures fed on luxuries of the richest kind, their enslaved victims laid at their feet, half-naked and starving. All they did for the children was to toss them over their ramparts of bales and packages a few broken crumbs of mouldy bread. Even the cup of cold water was denied them.

It was far in the dusk of the evening when the confederate padroni hurried their fettered gang from the shadows of Castle Garden to those of the streets of New York. Silently and impassively the melancholy procession moved on toward the main gate leading to the Battery.

At this place there is a low, narrow bridge, that was formerly used as a portcullis in time of war. Overhanging this bridge was a narrow gallery, protruding out from the upper ramparts of Castle Garden. In this retired gallery, immediately over the great gateway, it was once the custom for sentries to be stationed, to command an outlook of all who entered or retired from the old fortress. The passage under this gallery was dark and intricate. The children entered it with a feeling of dread, and momentarily hesitated to proceed. But the stern voice of Gambrina cried out, "Move on!" Not one of them dared to disobey those cold, harsh tones. Vincens led the mournful column; Gambrina brought up the rear.

Just as the last child was passing from under the shadow of the porch, and while both the padroni turned back to be sure that all their prey was in their hands, a deep, solemn voice from the gallery spoke aloud:

"Marco Vincens!"

The padrone stopped as if he had been struck by a rifle-ball. No one was in sight; and he looked around rapidly and nervously to see whence the sound proceeded. All was now silent. But the padrone still paused, and listened, like one transfixed to the spot. It was evident that he knew the voice, and was startled by it. The voice continued:

"I am watching you; beware! Remember your oath at Florence!"

The padrone turned back a little further, as if about to make a reply, when a policeman near by, who had been keeping guard at the open gateway of the Castle, sternly cried:

"Pass on! Pass on!"

Vincens instantly turned from the bridge, and ran up the Battery to overtake Gambrina and the children.

Whose was that mysterious voice? What did it mean?

We shall learn as we go on with our story.

CHAPTER VII.

BACK TO ITALY.

Wolves shall succeed for teachers; grievous wolves,
Who all the sacred mysteries of Heaven
To their own vile advantages shall turn,
Of lucre and ambition; and the truth
With superstition's sham tradition taint.

Milton.

MRS. GARCIA had sped rapidly to her interview with her secret confederate at Leghorn. There we leave her.

Mrs. Ferenza walked slowly and sadly up the Leghorn quay.

How many lingering looks did she cast on that distant horizon! She wished in vain for one more glance at the receding ship. Alas! it was now wholly out of sight — gone to the far-away America, with her darling child on board.

She now travelled back alone, as fast as the returning train would carry her, to her bereaved room in the old *Mansion di Lapo*. Her husband, who had been anxiously and tenderly waiting for her, greeted her at the antique archway with a loving kiss. But both were for a long time in silent sadness. Their only words were in the warm tears that coursed down their cheeks.

Lorette, dear, sweet, gifted Lorette, was gone! — gone, perhaps, never to return. She was a delicate and slen-

der child. How would she endure the privations of the long voyage? Who would care for her, now father and mother were left behind?

Then there came to the memory of Mrs. Ferenza the blessed words she had heard Lorette read to them — the promise of the ever-living, ever-present God:

'*The Lord thy God it is that doth go before thee. He will be with thee. He will not forsake thee, nor fail thee. Fear not, neither be dismayed.*'

The thick mists of superstition were slowly passing from the minds of these unsophisticated people. They were beginning, practically, to understand the real difference between a religion of forms and ceremonies and shams, and that '*pure religion and undefiled, before God and the Father,*' which is so infallibly taught in the Holy Bible. They could now see, as they had never before seen, the saving meaning of the words the absent Lorette used to sing to them and herself in sweet Italian music:

There is a fountain, filled with blood,
Drawn from Immanuel's veins;
And sinners, plunged beneath that flood,
Lose all their guilty stains.

The balm of the precious promises of the sympathizing Redeemer was quietly entering their wounded souls. Ah! it was to them the healing balm of Gilead, and the dear Christ they now earnestly sought was indeed the Good Physician there.

'*Through a glass, darkly*' they had looked on the cross, from their youths up. Now they began to see Him, who for them had hung and died upon it, face to face. Although, like St. Paul, they had been taught their faith in the strictest sect of the Pharisees, they knew but little indeed of the meek and lowly Jesus.

Kindly and lovingly the Great Teacher was now coming to them, by His own Spirit and word, that they might be truly taught of Him.

Thus they sat in their own retired room on the banks of the Arno. The cross of Christ once stood but a little way off from the waters of that beautiful river. They were constantly seeing the pictures of that cross on the walls of the churches where they worshipped. Its form stood by the wayside, and in many a niche, where they travelled. Lonely, desolate, bereaved of their only child, gilded pictures and sculptured crucifixes gave of themselves no instruction to their anxious minds — no consolation to their aching hearts.

But the soft, heavenly light of the promise of Christ began to dawn through the cold vapors that had so long surrounded them:

'*Lo! I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.*

'*Come unto Me, all ye that labor, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.*

'*Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest to your souls.*

'*For My yoke is easy, and My burden is light.*'

It was the voice of Jesus. It seemed to them as if they had never heard it until now.

Ah! how different from this teachable spirit of the Ferenzas was that of the Garcias! Mrs. Garcia had tarried with the wines and viands of the wily Marina's house until far into the night. But the husband and children were used to such freaks on her part; so that when she came staggering into her flashy home, it was not surprising that she should find both father and son sitting by a table of eatables and drinkables that

stood leaning against the partition wall, quaffing freely and boisterously of the intoxicating bowl.

It was near the break of day, and just as the cathedral bell was beginning to ring for early mass, Mrs. Garcia saw, at a hurried and angry glance at the empty bottles before them, how deeply the two men had been drinking. But she could not, nay, even dared not, reproach them, for she had been spending the night in doing the same wicked and foolish thing—and, besides, all of them were excited by the fiery liquor. So, muttering between her clinched teeth a vindictive curse, she threw herself, with all her journeying dress still on, upon the only sofa in the room, and was soon lost in a drunken slumber.

As the broad light streamed in through the arched and painted window, and the noise of the streets had risen loudly, Mr. Garcia rose languidly from the floor where he had fallen beside his son. Looking lazily and stupidly around the dusty and cluttered room, for the first time he appeared to notice his wife.

"Ho! Marguerite! Say! Is she gone?"

"To be sure she has," muttered the woman, in a suppressed tone, as if mad at being disturbed in her morning nap.

"Did you see her off?" he again inquired.

"Yes, I tell you!" she replied, sharply. "We all saw them off."

"*All?*" said Garcia. "Who do you mean by *all?*"

"Why the rest of us, to be sure!" she answered, pettishly. "What is that to you? She's gone all right, and that's enough."

"Enough, is it?" he added with a low sneer, that sounded like a venomous hiss. "And pray, Mistress Marguerite Garcia, will you be so very kind as to in-

form me where you have been since then? Surely, you have not spent all this time at the branch office of Marina, at Leghorn — the child-thief!"

"Signor Marina is a gentleman, Garcia! and that is more than I can say of *you!*" cried the woman, now fiercely springing from the lounge, like a tigress from its lair. "What have you to say against *him*, sirrah!" she exclaimed, raising her loud voice, until it could be heard above the rattle of the carriages and carts on the pavement. "What business is it to *you* where *I* have been? Who made you *my* master, fellow? I'll let you know that I'll come and go just when and where I please!"

"You will, will you?" shouted Garcia, moving toward the table, and taking from it one of the knives that he had been using.

"Lay down that knife!" the woman yelled, in a louder voice than his. "Lay it down, instantly, or you don't leave this room alive!"

She was now like a fiend in the opening frenzy of the mania of drink. With her right hand she tore open the bosom of her Italian jacket, disclosing the silver handle of a glistening stiletto.

"This little ornament," she continued, her voice becoming hoarser and more defiant, "is worth two of that old table-knife. This is as strong as steel and as sharp as a razor! *That*, to my certain knowledge, is only old iron, and blunt at that!"

She now threw herself into a fighting attitude, and fiercely screamed:

"Come on, you villain! Come on, if you dare! I'll answer your impertinent inquiries at the point of this dagger!"

Garcia lifted his arm, with the knife closely held in

his right hand, and was about springing forward to attack his wife, when the son, now roused from his drunken stupor where he had lain on the floor, rushed in between and kept them apart.

All the brute nature of the bandit was roused on one side; all that of the corsair on the other. Had not the now frightened and sobered son so opportunely interfered, a bloody fight would have ensued, and murder closed the scene.

"Put up your dagger, and get me my breakfast!" doggedly returned the man. "It is well the boy kept me from getting at you! Before I had got through I'd have cut you into inch pieces!"

With a besotted grunt, as if it were the only reply she deigned to make to this threat, the woman fell back again on the lounge, incoherently muttering:

"O! I've heard such brag as that often before! Now, go to work and get your own breakfast!"

Garcia made no reply; but, suddenly turning to his son, he grumbled, in a low, sullen key:

"Boy! let's take a drink over that! Such Tuscan courage is worthy of such a wife as mine—such a mother as yours! Fill your glass from that half-empty bottle, and pass the rest to me! The rest that's left will be just enough for my morning dram! It'll be a keen appetizer for that breakfast I am ordered to get!"

Rulers and people of Italy!—land of the prophets, apostles, scholars and patriots of old!—is it any wonder there are child-hunters among you?

CHAPTER VIII.

DEN OF THE PADRONI IN AMERICA.

Darkness above, despair beneath,
Around it flame, within it death.

Anon.

THE padrone den in New York, like Gambrina, who hired and fitted it up, was a frightful thing. It was located in the east central part of the city. The street on which it stood was narrow, crooked and filthy, and inhabited almost entirely by the lowest class of foreign emigrants. Many of the houses were low, wooden, tumble-down affairs, miserable even for the dwelling-places of pigs and goats, which were numerous among them.

To this dismal den the flocks of children were driven along, through the darkest, dirtiest and most unfrequented streets and alleys. The little frightened creatures were not allowed to stop for one moment on the way, not even to gratify their childish curiosity with the strange sights that greeted them on the side-walks and in the stores of the thoroughfares.

"No stopping there! Hurry along!" cried Gambrina, as he imperiously led the way. In his hand he carried a long, pliable rattan; and if any poor little straggler chanced to lag behind, weary and footsore, a clip over the head and shoulders, or across the face, was a reminder that such indulgences were not to be allowed.

The drove of human cattle was to be whipped into obedience.

Here was the future home in America into which Lucia and Lorette were thus ruthlessly forced. This was the den of these two wild beasts, where the children they had hunted were to be brought and kept as prisoners.

When the juvenile crowd came to the low, dark passage leading from the narrow street into the den, Gambrina did not allow them to pause an instant at the entrance, but rudely pushed them in.

There was only one door. Not a single window appeared in sight. The bottom of the cobble-stone passage was a filthy gutter, through which oozed a foul and fetid puddle of water, thrown out by the equally filthy and lazy occupants of the adjoining tenements. Slowly, like a black wounded snake, this thick stream of mud crept its way to the contiguous gutters of the outer street, and passed on from thence to the city sewers.

All the children were now crowded into one small, low, narrow room. It was literally black with lamp smoke. Large masses of floating lamp-black had risen up from the lamps, and mingled in the masses of flying dust that hung from the cracked and tottering ceiling overhead. They swayed wildly to and fro in the damp wind that swept along the dark passage, filling all the place with sickening odors.

On the opposite side of the room, directly against the door by which the children entered, was a still more narrow door, before which hung a dingy and dirty curtain, that partially hid a filthy secret recess beyond.

Not a ray of light nor breath of fresh air was ever allowed to enter this grovelling den, except through the little low door which the children had just entered. A

large kerosene lamp, with a dim and battered reflector attached, its chimney cracked and broken, its oil receiver grimed with crooked lines of dirt, hung against the wall. Only a few glimmering beams emanated from this poor apology for a light, and these were but sparingly disseminated over the centre of the room, by the worn-out and used-up reflector; leaving the corners as dark and dismal as ever. The whole room seemed filled with the darkness and effluvia of a malarial midnight, fighting off the entrance of the day.

The children paused as they crowded in, huddled rapidly together, and looked wildly around. The two padroni glared fiercely upon them. They glanced quickly over the group, carefully counting each one of the number, to be sure that none had escaped from their clutches. There were sixteen in all — boys and girls. They were now all still more completely in the hands of their oppressors.

Other parts of the den were occupied by boxes, which had once contained foreign goods, mostly Italian, and bore the letter M — diamond-marks of the party who had imported them. It was the trade-mark of Marina. Bales of cast-off clothes, bearing similar trade-marks, stood promiscuously tumbled among organs, tambourines, accordeons, and other instruments of music — while a pert, filthy, chattering monkey was hopping to and fro on the rude summit of the mass. Chairs, tables, washstands, broken mirrors, were piled and thrown around in utter confusion. In one corner were spread out on the thickly-coated floor rows of little straw beds, fit only to be occupied by dogs in their kennels.

Some of the rough boxes, strapped with narrow hoops of iron and leaning against each other, were marked

"Macaroni — Napoli." On these boxes lay half-devoured scraps of food, mingled with fragments of napkins and pieces of broken dishes. The empty soup bowls and plates lay around in confusion. Fingers had supplied the places of knives and forks, and the cheap and battered wooden and horn spoons gave evidence that they were innocent of the approaches of clean water. The padroni had never trusted their helpless slave-gangs with any valuable articles of table furniture, lest they might be tempted to appropriate them to supply their starving wants.

Here, then, in this horrid den, was to be the future home of these hunted children of Italy,—of Italy, once the chief seat of the religion, science and riches of the world.

Its odor was as horrible as its aspect. The pure air and light of heaven seldom ever reached and permeated its slimy depths. Its floor, its walls, its scanty furniture were all slippery with greasy dirt, and its atmosphere constantly filled with poisonous smoke.

A dingy cord of manilla hemp was stretched across the remotest end of the room from wall to wall. On this were suspended, at intervals, curious arrays of different kinds of Italian garments. Shawls, capes, coats, vests, and other articles, hung around in promiscuous confusion; all covered thick with dirt, and all emitting that offensive effluvia peculiar to the calling of the wearers.

All this was a new scene of horror to Lucia and Lorette. The steerage of the bark that brought them as prisoners from Italy was bad enough, but this was much worse. Their parents were indigent and ignorant; but they were not filthy. Here filth rioted in its own excesses; and cleanliness was a thing as much unknown as if it had never been.

In the midst of the stupid silence and bewilderment that had overcome the children, padrone Gambrina shouted:

"Down with your duds! — all of you; quick!"

Suiting the action to the word, both the padroni seized the bundles of clothing the terrified group had tugged along the streets, and threw them violently on the nasty floor. Lucia and Lorette, being nearest to Gambrina, at the time, were the first to feel his cruel grip, as he tore away their little packages, and hurled them on a dingy mass of rags that lay in one of the most distant corners.

"There!" cried he, with a low chuckle, "that's to be *your* bunk. Understand, eh? When I've got some time, and nothing else on hand, I'll look over your traps, and if I find anything there I think you don't want, I'll take care of it myself. Understand, eh? All your traps, little brats! has got to have your numbers fixed onto 'em. Understand, eh? *Your* numbers, gals, is 76 and 77. That's as fur as we've got onto the one hundred, ain't it, Marc?" he cried, stopping a moment in his work, and looking inquiringly over to Vincens.

"Yes! I reckon," replied the other padrone, mechanically, without raising his eyes from the half-opened bundle he held in his hand. "All right. Go ahead."

"Now, which is the oldest of you two gals?" resumed Gambrina, again fixing his keen, searching glance on Lucia and Lorette.

Lucia stood up first, as an answer to the question. She was too terrified to speak.

"*What's* your name?" he asked, with a leer in his deep, black eye.

"Lucia, signor."

"Good for old Italy!" added the padrone, with another leer. "How old are you?"

The child hesitated.

"Come, now! No dodging! Out with it! and mind you tell the truth! If you don't—I'll—!" His eyes flashed fire as he looked her full in the face.

"Fourteen, signor," Lucia answered.

"Fourteen!" he responded; "rather a small brat for *that* age. But you'll grow larger as you grow older!" "Lucia Garcia," he muttered, as he entered the name in his dirty and crumpled memorandum-book; then adding: "Age, fourteen; number, seventy-six."

Glaring again on the trembling children, he repeated:

"Squat down there, on them bundles of duds yonder, 76."

Gambrina's attentions were now turned to Lorette.

"What you say your name, spindler?" he asked, with a tone of sarcasm in his voice, as he eyed her delicate form.

"Lorette, signor," she replied, rising to her feet, and bending her glance away from his cruel looks.

"Lorette! Old Italy, again, forever!" cried the padrone, with a species of ironical ribaldry. "And what did you call your age, Miss Pretentious Modesty?" cried he, with a glance and tone of scorn. "Speak louder, you weakly scrawn!—or I'll find a way to your slender throat, you won't like. *Your* name and age?" he asked, turning abruptly and fiercely on Lorette.

The poor child was so frightened that she started tremblingly on her feet.

"Answer, quick!" cried the brute, with a motion toward his stiletto.

"Lorette, signor," she said.

"Age?"

"Thirteen, signor."

She dared not look the wretch in his horrid face.

"Fourteen — thirteen," muttered Gambrina to himself. "Both mighty small gals for them years. These city Florentinians never was a big race. But they 've got to do their parts just the same."

Turning brusquely on both the girls, he continued:

"Now, mind me, little gals! You has to do your works by your ages — not by your size. Understand, eh?"

Calling to Vincens, he coolly asked:

"These two gals had their suppers down at the Castle, did n't they?"

"Yes!" replied Vincens, his voice becoming harder than ever, as he glanced over the heads of the children: "All the supper they 'll get to-night."

"That 's so — exactly," quickly responded Gambrina. "All the supper they 'll get to-night! I thought so. Understand that, gals! Eh? Now stand up, here, in front of your padrone, signor Vincens."

The children implicity obeyed the harsh command.

"This is Lucia, signor. Give her a ticket numbered 76. She 's so entered in the book. Now," continued he, looking back to the children, "you first little brat we 'll sometimes call by your number, and sometimes by your name. Sometimes we 'll call you Lucia, and then, again, sometimes 76. Understand, eh? And you, weakling," he added, with a tone of derision, "you, Lorette, we number 77. Sometimes we 'll call you one thing, sometimes another. I 'm afraid, at the best, by any number, or by any name, you 're not of much account. But mind, both of you!" he continued, raising his voice, and giving it stern emphasis: "mind, I tell

you, and be sure and answer, be sure and come to us padroni, whatever number and whatever name we call you. Understand, eh?"

Pointing his long, lank, crooked forefinger at Lucia, he asked:

"What is your number, gal?"

"76, signor," demurely answered Lucia.

"And what's your number, spindler?" he asked, as he turned to Lorette, contemptuously:

"77, signor," she said, in a voice as strong as she could possibly employ.

"76 and 77," continued the padrone, repeating the names and numbers as one having authority. "Lucia, 76; Lorette, 77. So you are both marked and numbered. So you will always answer. It's so down in the Black Book. When we calls for returns from 76, you, Lucia, will come forrard. When we calls returns from 77, you, spindler Lorette, will do the same. And when you both comes forrards, mind that you returns every penny; every penny, I say! Understand, eh? Now, then, since you've had your suppers, go to your bunks."

The two little girls now retired, with all the rest, to their pallets of rags and straw. Four other girls had previously lain down, as close as they could be packed, in the same place.

The whole tired and hungry company tried to sleep. But to such a crowd, in such a place, sleep was impossible.

Night settled down darkly on the hunted strangers.

It was their first night in America.

Next morning, just at the break of day, all the children were rudely called up, to partake of what was called a breakfast. They had all been fasting for nearly

twenty-four long and lonely hours of misery; and miserable, indeed, was the attempt to break that terrible fast.

Scanty, to the last extremity, was their pittance of food. Their drink was no better. The wretched meal was quickly dispatched; the padroni all the while standing near by, and hurrying their poor captives to the utmost, begrudging them every mouthful they ate, and every drop they drank.

The two padroni took turns with their victims in the public places they frequented. This was the day for Vincens to remain at home. Gambrina was to take to the thoroughfares. They had spent nearly all the night in drinking and carousing together. Their wicked schemes of child-plunder had thus far worked to perfection. The game they hunted had all been safely bagged, and they were supremely happy. Now they could rob them at their pleasure, and divide the spoils between themselves — taking care, only, by deception, falsehood and forged accounts, to keep on business terms with their partners in infamy, both in Europe and America.

The plot was deeply laid. Its execution was carried forward with consummate skill. Men in authority, women moving in the so-called fashionable circles of society, some of whom were never suspected, and from all of whom better things were looked for, were connected with these infamous schemes against the helpless children of Italy. It might well be said of the little ones, in the words of holy writ:

'On the side of their oppressors there was power; and they had no comforter!'

The robber den of Italian padroni was not the only place where the rich spoils stolen from helpless children were received, secreted, divided and squandered. Many

a finely furnished office, many a splendid parlor, many a luxurious chamber, with its gorgeous bedsteads, its pillows of down and its tapestries of silk and gold, owed their existence and the revelries of their occupants, some of them in high life, to the gains that had been wrung from the performances, in the open streets, of Italian children.

Official participants in this vile traffic set their seals to the documents of these avaricious padroni, and shared with them their cruel plunder; plunder stained with the blood and wet with the tears of little children. Theirs was the commission business of infamy and crime. They lived on the fat of the land, while their victims starved. They were clad in purple and fine linen, while those on whose sufferings they rioted were but half clothed in rags. By the secret connivance of men in power this wicked business was carried on and prospered. The education, food, clothing, health and happiness of thousands of children, nay, even their very lives, were laid on the altars of avarice and lust, that the foul system of padronism had reared in different parts of the world.

Thus began the American career of Lucia Garcia and Lorette Ferenza. Often, at high noon, these two girls might be seen together, following the footsteps of their padrone through the great city of New York. Under the shadow of the Merchants' Exchange, on Wall street, they were wont to crouch, like two little doves who were flying from their pursuers. Throngs of devoted worshippers at the thousands of shrines in that Mecca of gold, crowded to and fro, where these young performers were pouring out on the busy air the strains of their instruments of music and the melody of their sweet voices. One of the padroni, Vincens or Gam-

brina, was invariably near at hand. Sometimes they were immediately with the children, directing their movements. Oftener they were secreted in some porch, down some area, under contiguous steps, or around a near corner, watching, as a vulture watches the prey it is just ready to devour. There was policy in this. If they were always seen with the children, it would be suspected that they were always to receive their gains. Whereas, while the children were apparently left to themselves, as public performers, many generous donors would give them money, under the impression that it would reward them directly, or else go to their supposed parents at home. So adroit were the deceptions of these consummate villains. But they were always close in sight of their abject dependents. A distant wave of the hand, a shrill whistle, a knock on the curbstone with a rude stick, was quickly heard by the children, and at once understood. There was meaning in it. Passing strangers would give to musical prodigies directly, when they would not to those who employed them.

When the Place of the Money-Changers had been visited, and all gleaned from the visit that could possibly be obtained, in that way and at that time, the padroni would abruptly drive their victims, like slaves, from the market-place. Then came the moment of the surrender of all their earnings. The greedy wretches were not content, as a general thing, to wait until the hour of night brought the children to darkness and the den. They snatched their money from them while yet they held it in their naked little hands, and immediately hurried them away to other places of labor, suffering and robbery.

"Understand, eh?" said Gambrina, on all such occasions. "Every penny!—every penny! Mind, now!

I've been watching you both! Open both your hands! Every penny, I say! Hand it over, quick!"

The last poor farthing was always forthcoming, from the delicate hand of the child to the large, dark hand of the padrone. That small hand never felt the touch of that farthing again.

Of one thing these children were sure. They were sure of miserable food. They were sure of other things. They were sure of ragged clothing. They were sure of a den for a home. They were sure of a hard pallet at night. They were sure, indeed, of all kinds of brutal treatment. Home, parents, brothers, sisters, all the innocent sports of childhood, that come sweetly as a balm to the spirits of the poor — ah! these outcast children had none! All of these were gone — gone, alas! perhaps forever! Squalor wasted their bodies. Superstition fettered their minds. Vice tempted to ruin their souls. They were hunted children, in the tangled thorns and barren wastes of life.

CHAPTER IX.

A SCENE IN THE DEN.

The poor beetle, that we tread upon,
In corporal suffering feels a pang as great
As when a giant dies.

Shakspeare.

ONE night, when the weather was unusually dark and stormy, the juvenile performers were driven from their accustomed public haunts to the dismal retreat of the den. They could hear the driving of the wind along their narrow alley, the pattering of the big drops of rain on the thin roof over head, and the dull roar of the city in the distance.

The padroni were both there. They had extorted all they had from the children, and counted it penuriously on their dirty table, under the dim light of the old battered lamp. They were both in particularly bad humor with themselves, the children, and, more especially, the paltry income of the day.

The whole of the vile den was now steaming with pollution. The smoking lamp sent out unusually pestiferous odors. The filthy flakes of lamp-black were falling, like flakes of snow dyed in ink, all around the dingy room, and covering every object within their reach. The Naples macaroni box, dirty and greasy from being so constantly occupied, stood at right angles from its dark corner. Two girls, only half-clad in their out-door habiliments, cold and dripping with the rain,

leaned up against the sides of the box. The heat of the red-hot stove drew out the vapor from their filthy clothes, so that they smoked in curls of steam, like two charred sticks of wood taken from the fire, and partly quenched with water.

Groups of children lay around in heaps, or lounged against the rude pieces of broken furniture. Some held in their naked hands their greasy hats and tangled bonnets, while others clung, with the force of instinctive habit, to the instruments of music by means of which they were forced to earn their daily bread.

A rickety pine table stood against the centre of the wall. Here was a bottle, already half emptied of its poison whiskey. Close beside it was a shattered bowl and thickly-coated wooden spoon. Every drop of soup was gone. A black and rumpled curtain hung from the low ceiling down to the floor, near by, only half hiding the low door-way beyond. The door itself had been long since battered down, to make room for the poor sufferers, and split up for fire-wood.

Directly opposite the burning flicker of the lamp, suspended high on the shattered and cracked plastering, as if looking down in anger on the atrocities committed in the room, was a highly-colored picture of General Garibaldi, in his familiar uniform of the red shirt. Never did the Italian hero seem more out of place. The only wonder of the passing stranger would be how such a picture should be hung in such a den of infamy. Be that as it may, Garibaldi was certainly not its patron saint.

Beneath this picture, surrounded by miniature flags of Italy, and sundry weapons of war, in rude Roman capitals, were these words:

"E'VIVA ITALIA!"

On a raised platform, which stood immediately under the lamp, on the opposite side of the room, was an ancient street organ. It was evidently in its dotage, and had seen better days. An occasional touch from some frivolous hand gave instant evidence that it was in the venerable stage of wheezing and gasping for breath, and that its oft-used internal pipes were sadly out of gear. The crank by which the interior works were wound up was nearly twisted from its handle. The aperture for the winding key was battered all over, as if hands far from steady had frequently fumbled about, either ignorantly, or indolently, or drunkenly, for an entrance.

In front, in the midst of hieroglyphics, capped with plates of brass and carved ornaments of spurious gold and silver, stood out over the fancy pipes the arms of Italy. They seemed as much out of place, associated as they were with that classic and beautiful land, the ancient birthplace and home of music and song, as the picture of Garibaldi did in the den of the padroni.

A large monkey, clad in the full regalia of his tattered royalty, was perched on the top of the organ. The light shone down full on his bare and grizzled face. His tasselled cap hung drooping under his elongated chin, a flaming feather stuck in its rim. A flaunting flannel cape hung over his shrugged-up shoulders. With a saucy leer in his restless eyes, he was leaning over the organ, and bending his gaunt form as far forward as the rope that bound him would allow; all the while chattering and screeching, at intervals, at the top of his voice. The excited creature leaped frequently on the top of the organ, clambered over the carved crown that surmounted it, and seemed to be just ready, every moment, to spring out into the room. He was

evidently bewildered and maddened at what he saw and heard.

The children were occupied, as usual at such times, in thoughtless and indolent pursuits. Some of them were attracted by the scene that so wrought up the monkey to fury. Among these stood Lucia. She was completely overcome with terror at the sight. Her head had fallen down on her right hand, which leaned against one of the corners of the organ, while her left loosely held her tambourine, as if she were just ready to let it fall on the floor at her feet.

It was a sad scene that was now going on. A very small boy, only some nine years of age, dressed shabbily in the old cast-off suit of a much older lad, was held in the middle of the room by the brutal grip of the padrone Gambrina. The body of the child was nearly all naked, especially around the back, arms and shoulders. The rest of his garb hung in a mass of rags around his dirty feet. He was dragged close up to the knees of Gambrina, and held there as if in the vice of a blacksmith, or the hug of a bear.

The right arm was in the right hand of Gambrina. The left hung helplessly down at the side of the child. He held in the right hand, which the grip of Gambrina forced high in the air, a small violin — the only means by which he lived.

He was a pitiful picture of fright and sorrow. He was held to the floor, as if transfixed to it by a bolt of iron. His piteous cries betokened the intensity of his agony. It was these that had attracted the wild notice of the poor monkey — for the child was his street companion. Together they had often roamed along the stone pavement; he with the piping organ, the other with the tinkling triangle. The monkey had seen his

fellow-traveller rudely handled by the padrone; but he had never heard him utter such piteous cries before.

In the midst of this exciting scene, the padrone Vincens was lying half drunk, stupid and indifferent, on a soft pile of manilla mats. Stretched out at his ease, he turned a maudlin look around, as if he took no personal interest in what was going on. Gambrina knew well enough how to manage these little matters. Why should he care?

So, leaning carelessly back on his easy bed, drawing up one of his knees for greater convenience, glancing at his long pipe to see that it was still well filled, he took another large draught from his bottle of whiskey, and gazed idly on. A thick cloud of tobacco smoke curled up lazily around him from the floor, moving in circles over his head, like the folds of vapory serpents afloat in the air.

More of the children had now become interested spectators of the scene. But not one of them dared to move a finger, or utter a syllable.

Vincens, alone, seemed perfectly at home, and to relish the proceedings immensely. With an occasional loud and coarse chuckle he cried out to Gambrina in Italian:

"Good! Give it to him! I'll hold his clothes while you lay it on!"

Poor Lorette was the most terrified and agonized of all. She had softly crept to the only passageway out of the room. Here she clung to the side of the door-post, half hiding her trembling form and shading her tearful eyes in the old curtain that hung down from the ceiling. She was struck utterly dumb with amazement and grief. Then came the impulse to rush out and call for help; but fear, and her abject dependence, chained

Scene in the Padroni Den.

her to the spot. The dear child could only weep and pray for the poor sufferer.

The padrone had now dragged his helpless victim still farther into the centre of the den. Here he held the child still closer in the demoniac grip of his left hand. His right was raised high aloft, and flourished a knotted leathern scourge — such as was once used in the Roman army — the same, in point of historical fact, as the cruel soldiers of ancient Jerusalem employed, when they seamed with bleeding gashes the person of the Son of God.

This little sufferer, also, was from Italy. His name was Jose Maria Aquila. He had neither father nor mother, brother nor sister. So far as was known he had not a relative on the earth. He was the youngest violin player in the whole troupe. He played it with consummate skill, so as to secure instantly the admiration of all who heard him. His conduct, as a child, was as beautiful as his playing was charming. All who knew little Jose, the Italian violinist, loved him well.

This day he had hurried back to the den, through the driving storm, sick and penniless. He had wandered, barefooted and weary, all day in the rain, in company with his keeper, with the monkey and the organ, alternating his performances between his violin and his triangle — but he had taken nothing from the streets. The people would not come out in the rain even to see the monkey perform, or to hear the young violinist; and when the coarse keeper forced his way into his familiar haunts, and some small stipends were doled out to him, he kept the whole himself, spent them for drink and tobacco, and then swore that little Jose had stolen them from his organ-drawer!

The boy thus fell into the hands of these child-hunt-

ers, like a bird into the snares of the fowlers. He was completely in Gambrina's clutches. That brutal wretch and drunkard — aptly named Bruta Gambrina — would not listen for a moment to the least word of explanation or apology.

"The young thief!" he shouted to the equally imbruted Vincens, across the den. "He 's stolen the money! He 's got it now secreted somewhere! I 'll whip both the secret and the money out of him, or I 'll whip out his life!"

"J — j — es' so," shouted back Vincens, his voice now thick with the effects of the liquor he had drunk so freely. "Gi — gi — give it to the thieving br — br — at! L — — lay it on — h — hot and h — h — eavy — Brutey! Ha! ha! ha! ha! Only hear the young scamp h — h — oller! Hear h — h — im, n — — ow! It 's 's — g — good 's 'er — play! Ha! ha!"

All this while the flogging was going on. The monkey was chattering and screaming. The other children were sobbing and praying around.

Flying through the air, above his head, waved from the whip-stock in his hand, like a nest of scorpions with their heads fastened together, the scourge of Gambrina was lashed down on the shoulders, arms and back of the groaning and screaming child. Thicker and faster, harder and harder, the blows fell on the torn and shrinking flesh. Great red wales followed each blow, rising up, as it were, on the body of the sufferer, to write, in lines of blood, their sentence of condemnation against the cruel scourger.

In his fiendish excitement the long, coarse black hair of Gambrina fell down in large masses over his low forehead. His mustache drooped over his mouth, rendering his hideous face still more hideous, while his

projecting, tusk-like teeth, as his lips curled with demoniac hate, shone and glittered like the jaws of a wolf.

"Yer young imp of Satan!" cried Gambrina to the child: "how dare yer do such a thing to yer padrone? Don't yer know that if I chose I'd kill yer in a minnit? Eh?"

"Cor—cor—ect!" mumbled out Vincens, who had now fallen helplessly over on the floor, completely drunk. "H—h—it 'im ag—gin! Var—r—mint! Stealin' fr'm 'is fr—fr—nds!"

"Take *that!*" continued Gambrina, as he struck violently again across the tender young breast. "And *that!* And *that!*"

Each blow preceding and following each word.

The screams of the child were now simply terrible.

He sank down on the floor, with heart-piercing sobs, crying:

"Oh! Oh! Don't kill me!"

"It's 'oh!' it's 'oh!' is it? I'll give yer more 'oh!' before I get through with yer! I'll make yer say 'oh!' for the last time, ef yer don't give up that money!"

"Cor—r—ect!" grunted Vincens from his stye, on the floor, now utterly helpless in his debauch.

Little Jose Maria had sunk down in speechless agony.

The sudden cessation of the blows, and the silence of the cries of the child, reacted on Vincens. He started from his prostrate position, and leaned forward from his mats, resting on his left elbow. Removing his long filthy pipe from his mouth, he reached out again for his bottle. But he was too drunk to reach it securely, so it fell out of his grasp, tumbling over on the floor, and spilling the vile contents around.

Recovering himself and the bottle, a moment after, the drunken wretch turned to Gambrina, and muttered out:

"'E—e's got the m——money. B——b—rutey! G—got it, *s—s——ure!* W—whip'p' it out 'm, *I* say!"

Gambrina renewed his blows on the tenderest part of the child's side, and the trembling creature crept in between the legs of his tormentor, who thundered out:

"So! yer mean to creep away, do yer? I'll see 'bout that!"

Stooping down low, the monster lifted up the boy by main force, and held him out, at arm's length, before all the children.

"Look there!" he shouted again, beside himself with rage, and the overpowering passion of drink and avarice that was so strong within him:

"I'll teach all yer brats what yer'll git by stealin'! See *that*, eh!"

As he ended this sentence, he threw the boy on the floor with a violence that might have broken every bone in his emaciated body. In his fall the boy knocked the violin out of his hands, so that as he fell on it the instrument was smashed to atoms.

"There!" cried the padrone, springing forward, with the rage of a tiger who had lost his prey. "Another violin knocked all to pieces—and not a stiver of money brought in to-day by this pup! I've a mind to smash him to flinders, too, on the spot!"

"C—c—cor—rect!" muttered Vincens, who had but just understood the last part of this threat of Gambrina, and thought it would at once be carried into execution.

"Look—a—here!" continued Gambrina, as Vin-

cens tried to recover himself, and listen. "This yere chap haint got no father, nor mother, nor no other folks that we knows on, has 'e? Eh, Marc?"

"Cor—r—ect!" again muttered Vincens.

"He 's a sickly sprout of a brat, any how!"

"Ay! ay!" again growled Vincens from the floor. "Cor—r—ect! No father—no m—m—mother—no—no br'—th—er—no sis—sis—t'r. Whar—t 's 'e—good—for?"

"Good for nothing!" retorted Gambrina. "The same as *you* are, just now."

"Cor—r—rect!" mumbled Vincens. "But I say. Brut—ey! let 's t—t—ake 'noth'r drink, ole—fel—ler! Eh?"

Nothing loth, Gambrina pushed his way to the bottle over the children, leaving poor little Jose Maria to crouch down where he left him. The child turned over on his breast, exposing to all the horror-stricken group his emaciated back, that was seamed all over with gashes and red and clotted with his blood.

Lifting up the bottle of liquor and nearly draining it of its contents, Gambrina rushed back to the fallen child. In a moment more he seized the dripping scourge, and began rapidly repeating his demoniac blows.

"I 'll kill him if he don't give up the money!" shouted Gambrina, who began at once to feel the influence of the large draught of liquor he had so greedily swallowed.

"Cor—r—ect!" added Vincens: "'e 'can——eas'ly sp—sp—are 'im!"

"That 's so!" replied Gambrina. "But, then, there 's the bill for burying his carcass!"

"'Spence?" Vincens answered. "N—ot much, 'reckon!"

"That's so, Markey, my boy! That's so! Coffin's ready made, ain't it?"

"Cor — rect! Ov'r there 'n 'e cor — ner!"

"Too large, by half!"

"'En — git 'n oth'r not s' big!"

"Jes so! I'll look over the nest of coffins we have on hand!"

Thus the two villains conversed with one another, over the prostrate form of the mangled and bleeding child.

Gambrina now threw aside a filthy pile of rags from a dark corner, revealing the hitherto unnoticed presence there of a stack of rude pine coffins. They were all of the juvenile sizes, and painted a dead black.

Poor little Jose Maria was so small that he had not entered into the calculation of the padroni when they spent a portion of their idle time in making these coffins. They were all packed in a nest together, the largest on the outside, and filled down close to the smallest, so as to save room in the den. Everything about them was of the cheapest and meanest construction. A coarse resemblance of a death's head and cross bones was cut in the wood on each coffin-lid. No glueing or dove-tailing marked any part of the work. The rough boards, full of knots and splits and splinters, were just nailed together by the old rusty nails that had come across the ocean in the plundered chests of the children, and in the boxes that brought their macaroni from Naples, Florence and Leghorn.

These silent black monitors were kept handy in the den, not only for convenience and economy's sake, but that they might be occasionally used still more to overawe and terrify the children. Here were their coffins, already prepared and stacked up for them, beforehand.

They were an admonition to them that if they did not render implicit obedience to their padroni in all things, — especially if they did not return every day and night every penny that they worked so hard to earn,— they would all suffer death. They were to be deprived of food, stripped as far as possible of clothing, shut up and whipped as often and as long as the avarice and drunkenness of the padroni might demand; and then, for keeping one poor penny, no matter for what purpose, they were in danger of death.

Such is the system of padrone slavery among captive Italian children.

The heat of summer, the cold of winter made no difference. The child might be sick, and buy some few drops of medicine prescribed by a worthy physician. It might be hungry, nigh to starving, and spend a penny of what it earned to obtain a morsel of food. It might be half-naked, and be burning with heat, or shivering with cold. All the same to the hard-hearted padroni. Their slavery knew no mercy; their bondage cared for nothing else but to be cruel. They claimed to own these children, body and soul; every moment, and everywhere. Even the very blood of their young hearts the padroni would coin into money.

The last low flicker of the old lamp of the den had now gone out. The cries and groans of the whipped child had ceased. The wild screams of the monkey were heard no more. Darkness had settled down on a den of silence. The padroni, drunk and stupid, lay snoring in their filth. The sad groups of the children were piled around. The most of them were so completely exhausted by their sufferings that they sank off to uneasy slumbers. Some few of them, oppressed with their toils and heart-broken at thoughts of home, of

fathers and mothers, and other dear kindred far across the sea, were tossing on their beds of rags, unable to sleep. Hungry, thirsty, sick and weary, they wore the dark night away, longing for an escape from the den, for the comparative freedom of the open air, and the little tokens of kindness which even the cold charity of the great world outside might dole out among them.

The morning was now beginning to break. Poor little Jose Maria had just sufficient strength left, as he fell out of the relaxed grip of the drunken padrone, to creep to a pile of dry and warm rags near the stove. Here he had lain for hours, afraid to move, afraid even to groan. He could barely breathe, in the torture of his agony. No home — no country; — no father, to protect him with his strong arm; no mother to fold him in her loving bosom; no brother to shield him; no sister to soothe; a broken and bruised waif of humanity, he lay there alone in that padroni den in the great and christian city of New York.

As the hour came for the elder children to do the drudgery of supplying themselves and the rest of the company with their messes of macaroni, and other similar food, groups of half-starved expectants began to be formed around different parts of the den.

The dingy and sparse sops were soon passed from hand to hand, and from mouth to mouth.

Immediately the silent band of waiters came to where Jose Maria was lying. He was found sticking to the floor, in a pool of his own blood. His little face was turned toward the wall. His eyes were wide open, as if his gaze was fixed immovably on the picture of the noble patriot Garibaldi, that hung before him.

The attending children rolled him gently over on his back, and kindly put their small cup of broth to his

pale lips. But his large eyes moved not from their fixed gaze. It was only the change of the position of his body that had turned them toward heaven.

The child-nurses pressed the cup on his lips. But they opened not to receive any portion of its contents. They called his name, softly:

"Jose! Jose Maria!"

He answered not.

Then they said:

"Wake up, Jose! Here's some breakfast for you!"

Still he was silent.

Then one kind-hearted little girl, who sometimes went in his company on the streets, put her ear close down to his mouth, to learn if she could hear his breathing. There was not a single breath there. Then they put their hands on his face. It was almost as hard as marble, and as cold as ice.

Jose Maria was dead.

CHAPTER X.

STRANGE VISITORS.

What blessed angels God sends to and fro,
To wait on sinful man, e'en on his foe!

Spenser.

IT was the morning of the holy sabbath day.

The padroni woke early. The moment they discovered, by the unusual movements among their victims, that little Jose Maria Aquila was dead, stupid as they were from their last night's drunk, they resolved to bury the body without the delay of a moment.

Adepts as they were in falsehood, practicing all kinds of secret villany, they had little or no difficulty in making up a story that should account for the death of the child, and secure authority for his burial.

Washing off his blood-stains, wrapping the corpse in the cleanest strips of rags that could be conveniently procured, to save appearances, they sawed off the ends of the smallest coffin, carefully saving all they could of the painted wood for kindling their fires, and crowded the body into its last narrow bed.

Every child in the den was called to look on the little skeleton face, and warned, as it stood by the coffin, of the danger of disobedience to the orders of the padroni. Withholding money, however obtained, even by the free gift of the charitable, and however much it might be needed by the children for bread to save their lives,

or shoes to keep their naked feet from the snowy pavement, was insubordination; and insubordination to Italian padroni, they could here see for themselves was — death!

They were then commanded to abject silence. So sure as they broke that silence, so sure a severe flogging would follow. Perhaps, something worse.

A respectable Italian family resided in the neighborhood of the den. This family consisted of but two — a husband and wife. They were both somewhat advanced in years, and were noted among all who knew them for their unobtrusive deeds of charity. Signor Persina Guccioli was a kind-hearted gentleman, and madame Guccioli was equally kind. They had resided in America many years, and spoke well the language of the country.

Living so near the den of the padroni, they had occasion to watch their conduct toward the children they so arbitrarily controlled. They saw how these wretched men were plunging headlong into dissipation. They trembled for the helpless little ones from their own native land, so completely in the power of such heartless villains.

Whenever, therefore, the padroni went off, as they were now accustomed to do more frequently, as their ill-gotten gains increased, on furloughs of drunkenness and gambling, the old couple were wont to take the children from the den to their own quiet home. Here other children were sometimes led in, like lambs gathered from the surrounding wilderness, to be fed, warmed and comforted.

Even in the dismal and now frequently deserted den itself, these good people were accustomed to devote a portion of their time in caring for the juvenile occu-

pants. They looked after the food and clothing of the children, as far as the overbearing tyranny of the padroni would allow, and always took special pains to minister to such of them as were sick.

Madame Guccioli was a devoted christian. Her husband, the signor, had not such a practical experience of religion as she had, although he joined heartily in all her benevolent labors. Both of them were constant attendants on the services of the Italian Mission of New York. Here it was, in harmony with sweet songs in the Italian language, that they heard, also in that language,

> The old, old story
> Of Jesus and His love.

Here it was, best of all, that they gave their aged hearts to Christ. Here they laid the ripeness of their experience, in Europe and America, at the foot of the cross.

As Gambrina and Vincens went out to bury the dead Jose Maria, after obtaining, by false pretences, a written permit, the rest of the children were taken at once to the hospitable home of the Gucciolis. How sweet a retreat it was to the foot-sore, hungry and mournful little crowd! How gladly, with what bounding steps, they all entered those welcome doors! What a contrast was this pleasant dwelling to the smoky and dirty den of the padroni! What a delight to these outcast and hunted children to mingle in services of the Italian Mission Chapel, and for only a few hours to receive the instructions of the Italian Mission School!

Just as the school was closing, that memorable Sunday morning, and the children were expressing their gratitude at being invited in by the good Gucciolis, two young strangers suddenly entered the room.

They were both gentlemen — and Italians. Judging by his dress and manner, the elder was the more thoroughly Italian of the two.

Both, on presenting their credentials, were invited by the teacher to address the scholars. All the children rose as the gentlemen came forward to the teacher's platform, and paid them becoming tokens of respect.

It was a rare treat to that company of little wanderers when the soft, silvery accents of Italia, in christian tones, fell on their eager ears. They were instantly hushed to silence, and all listened with rapt attention to their native tongue.

It appeared, as the two visitors introduced themselves, that the younger one had been longer in America. He was now a student in an American college. Both of them, however, evidently dearly loved their own native Italy. Both were doing what they could to advance her honor and her happiness. They loved all the children of Italy, wherever scattered, up and down the earth. On her behalf they had crossed the sea, and were traversing these hospitable American shores.

"Let us sing together!" said the younger stranger, with a smile, familiarly addressing his excited audience. "Let us sing an Italian song."

Here was a surprise, indeed, to these juvenile musical amateurs. To be addressed in Italian by such a pleasant-looking gentleman was delightful. Now to be invited to sing with him, in their own language, was charming, indeed.

"Oh! isn't it nice?" "How beautiful!" "Yes, sir!" and such like expressions of grateful pleasure saluted the stranger from all parts of the school.

On a small desk, in front of the speaker, was a copy

of the holy bible in Italian and English. Near by was a melodeon, on which lay several copies of songs in the Italian and English languages. Historical, national, patriotic and scriptural pictures hung around the room, with suitable maps of Italy and the American continent. It was a beautiful intellectual home, where pilgrims from Italian and other shores were always made welcome.

"I guess we *will* sing with you, signor!" cried one of the smaller boys present, as he sprang up and threw out his tiny hands toward the strangers — his emphatic use of the familiar word "guess," showing plainly how apt a scholar he was in learning American idioms.

Seating himself quietly at the melodeon, the younger strange visitor ran his fingers rapidly along the keys. Then he broke out with one of the sweetest strains of Italy, in which his companion heartily joined. Then came the chorus, in which every child in the room took part. They all knew the song the moment the first note fell on their ears. It was the welcome song of the dear old land across the big waters. How those poor little hunted ones loved it! How it carried them all back to the freedom and happiness of childhood at home!

Other songs quickly followed; then came a warm-hearted, tender address, full of good advice, still in Italian, with many proofs of sympathy and love. It was a sweet balm to those little wounded souls. With simple words, welling up freely from a heart full of sincere devotion, he told the gathered wanderers before him the wonderful story of Christ, and led them up, step by step, from the manger and the miracles to the garden and the cross.

It was a touching and beautiful sight. At the feet of

those two young Italian christian strangers sat this company of Italian children. They looked in each other's eyes, they listened to each other's voices, and they mutually felt that they were already friends. Tears, warm and congenial tears, flowed freely on both sides — from the platform and from the benches. Never before had such home-like strains sounded in that room; never before had it echoed to the story of Jesus, told with such truthful pathos by an Italian tongue.

The child-hunters of Italy were at bay here. The tender lambs they had so long and so cruelly been hunting were safe, here, in a christian fold.

"Oh! I wish *my* father could hear that song!" said a dark-eyed boy, as the great tear-drops rolled down in torrents over his sun-burnt cheeks.

"I wish *my* mother could hear it, too!" added a pretty black-haired girl, as she wiped her tear-wet eyes with her cunning little Italian pinafore.

"Please, signor! won't you sing us another song?" half a dozen voices joined in chorus to ask.

"Certainly!" responded the signor. "With the greatest pleasure. And I am very glad to have you children join so heartily in the chorus. You understand the words, I see."

"Indeed we do!" quickly answered the whole company. "Every word, signor!"

"I am going to sing that song in Italy, one of these days," said he.

"You are?" was their expression of delighted surprise.

"Then you're going back to Italy?" inquired the largest boy, who seemed to be selected to speak for the rest of the school.

"I hope to, before long," the stranger replied.

"Please, signor, may n't *I* go with you?" asked the smallest boy, springing off his bench, and running toward the platform where the singer stood.

"And *I*, too? May n't *I* go?" instantly inquired a pretty little girl of twelve summers. "Oh! I want to go home, *so* bad!"

"What part of Italy are you from, please?" asked a burly lad, speaking in Italian, with earnest emphasis.

"Naples," replied the young stranger, a sweet smile of remembrance rippling over his fine features.

"Naples! that 's where *I* came from," interrupted another boy.

"And *I!*" "And *I!*" chimed in several buoyant voices.

"But, now, don't you all want to know where *I* came from," asked the elder visitor.

"O! yes, signor! Please tell us, do! do!" repeated half a score of voices.

"Well, dear children! I came from the Island of Caprera. Now who of you can tell me where *that* is?"

"Please, signor! *I* can tell," said a modest girl, as she lifted up her right hand.

"Say on!" he answered, with a pleased glance at the speaker.

The young scholar displayed a look of startled anxiety, which quickly changed to one of modest self-possession, as she replied:

"The Island of Caprera — is — — a — small island in the Mediterranean Sea, close by the coast of Sardinia."

The other children looked up with a feeling of pride to this young girl. She was a favorite among them.

Discovering her genius, madame Guccioli had taken

her under her special charge, and placed her advantageously in one of the Common Schools of New York.

"Right!" said the stranger, with an approving nod.

"And *I* know who lives there!" shouted a brave-looking boy, coming forward with a becoming bow.

"Who is it?" asked the stranger, curiously.

"*General* GARIBALDI!" replied the boy, at the very top of his voice.

"Right again!" the stranger added. "And General Garibaldi is *my* father."

At this announcement the warm Italian enthusiasm of the school broke forth in a prolonged shout. One broad-shouldered lad, more enthusiastic even than the rest, cried out:

"Three cheers for General Garibaldi!"

In a moment more the cheers rang out from all the throats at once, sweeping along like a torrent to the doors and windows.

Before silence could be restored, another boy sprang on his seat, and waving his hat, exclaimed:

"Three cheers for General Garibaldi's son!"

Heartily all the boys and girls joined their voices together.

It was some moments before they calmed down, at the kind request of the manager of the school, in which both the young strangers earnestly joined.

Never was there anything more thoroughly Italian. It was genuine, too. So they talked and chattered together, like so many magpies. They were all back again to Italy, romping through its mountains and valleys once more, and mingling their rattling voices with its sunny streams and golden clouds.

How seldom, away there in their weary rounds with the padroni, in America, or in the damp and dark

dens, had they listened to such sweet words and songs as fell from the tongues of these Italian strangers! It was just so like the dear home, away over the water.

So many hundreds in America had called them "street Arabs," and "tramps," and "vagabonds," and "vagrants," that to be spoken and sung to tenderly, and even lovingly, by real gentlemen — ah! it was such a balm to their sad and wounded young hearts, that they all wept tears of joy at the scene.

The boys, especially, thinking now the ice was broken, and that they might do as they pleased, mounted on the benches, clapped their hands, shouted and waved their semi-soldier caps to their hearts' content.

One of the little fellows, impulsive and joyous like an enthusiastic Genoese as he was, seemed to think the younger stranger had been neglected. So he cried out above the din, just as boys often cry, when playing together not two feet apart:

"Three cheers for that other young gentleman, there!"

"Hurrah!" "Hurrah!" came the response, in a wild and joyous shout, from the throats of every boy and girl in the room.

The stranger politely lifted his hand, with the white, soft palm toward the children, and pleasantly replied:

"Hush — h, dear children! No more cheers, if you please!"

Instantly every voice was hushed to silence.

"My countryman here," he continued, speaking gently, — "your countryman, as well as mine, — is much obliged to you for this unexpected compliment; and so am I, just as much obliged. We both love General Garibaldi very much indeed. But it was not on his account, not to get cheers for him, or ourselves,

that we came to see you to-day. Be still now, please, and we will tell you that we came here to talk to you about Christ."

Here one mischievous boy, unable to contain longer his pent-up exuberance, was about to burst forth: "Three cheers for Chri—," when he was abruptly stopped by his more considerate sister, close by his side, who dexterously clapped her hand directly over his open mouth, checking his enthusiasm and his breath at the same moment.

But the sister was the stronger as well as wiser of the two, and held firmly to her grasp. In a moment more he recovered his equilibrium, and subsided into respectful silence, with the rest.

"Dear little children of Italy!" continued the speaker, not heeding the interruptions, "I am very glad to meet you in America. The union between these two countries is like that between the parent and the child. We Italians ought all of us to be on our good behavior in the United States of America.

"Above all, children, you should feel that it was the hand of God that guided our great ancestor, Christopher Columbus, to discover these wonderful western shores. It was the finger of the Almighty that gave direction to the little Italian ship, whose bow first touched the beautiful island of San Salvador.

"But, dear children, I have come here from Italy to tell you that you, also, are controlled by the same invisible hand that led that brave sailor all the way from Genoa across an unknown ocean.

'God moves in a mysterious way
His wonders to perform;
He plants His footsteps in the sea,
And rides upon the storm.

Deep in unfathomable mines
Of never-failing skill,
He treasures up His bright designs,
And works His sovereign will.'

"Now I want you to look to God at all times, dear children. Mind what I say. Look to God at all times, and everywhere; in America as well as in Italy.

"The holy bible which you see here before us, printed in our own native tongue, contains this divine announcement:

"'*God dwelleth not in temples made with hands*'—that is, God dwelleth not only or solely in such sacred places — but the heavenly message further tells us:

"'*God is a spirit; and they who worship Him should worship Him in spirit and in truth.*'

"God, dear children, is everywhere and always present.

"In the book of psalms, printed here in Italian, you may read these words describing God:

"'*Whither shall I go from Thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from Thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, Thou art there. If I make my bed in hell, behold Thou art there, also. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there shall Thy hand lead me, and Thy right hand uphold me.*'

"Wherever you are, therefore, dear children, and at whatever time of your lives, you may come directly to God. It is through His Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord, that God says to us all:

"'*Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not; for of such is the kingdom of heaven.*'

"Now, do any of you understand what is meant by coming to Jesus?"

There was silence in the school.

"You don't answer? Well, I will tell you.

"Coming to Jesus is being sorry for our sins, and believing that He will forgive us.

"But, perhaps, some of you youngest children think that Jesus won't understand you, if you try to speak to Him.

"Let me tell you, children, that Jesus understands every word you say, as well as everything you do. He knows all languages, and all hearts. He can answer your prayers; He can forgive all your sins.

"Yes, dear children! and He can and will do it now, and here, if you will only call upon Him.

"Hear what the bible says:

"'*Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return unto the Lord, and He will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon.*'"

Just as the speaker closed, and was about to take his seat on the platform, some of the boys were still ready to give him three cheers.

"Now," said he, gently raising his hand again, and motioning for continued silence, "children, I am going to sing you another song, composed recently for Italian children, just like you. Will you listen to me?"

The only reply he could get to his question was the expressive one of clapping hands. It was their compromise for cheers.

"Have you any small instrument of music here?" he asked.

"No! signor!" was the prompt answer of a dozen voices. "The padroni won't let us have none, 'cept they 's with us," said one of the oldest boys, with a downcast look.

"Why not?" inquired the visitor.

"'Cause, signor," the same boy replied, "ef we has 'em with us, the padroni thinks as how we may earn suthin' for oursels; which the padroni won't let us do it, no how, please, signor!"

"Please, signor!" interrupted Lucia, with a modest curtesy, "I guess I can run to madame Guccioli's, close by, and get my tambourine!"

"Your tambourine?" said the stranger, with a suppressed smile. "That 's very kind of you; but I hardly think that instrument will do for an accompaniment to singing."

"O!" simpered Lucia, somewhat abashed, even for her. "I did n't think of that, signor! Excuse me, please, signor!"

"Certainly, my little miss!" he pleasantly replied. "Your offer is just as kind. I would accept it, if I could, with all my heart."

"Would a guitar answer, please, signor?" inquired Lorette, with a voice scarce above a whisper.

"A guitar? Ah! yes, that will do, exactly, for a song of Italy!" said he.

"I can run to madame's, in a moment. I 'll loan you *my* guitar for a *little* while — that is, if you 'll take *good* care of it!" she added, her eyes casting a timid and anxious look on the floor.

"I 'll *try*, signorita," he replied; "and if I injure it, I 'll get you another."

"O! it 's not really *mine*, signor!" she added, quickly. "The padroni never allow us children to own *anything!*"

"Not even your own instruments? Nor what you earn?" continued the stranger, with deep feeling in his inquiries.

Lorette was silent. She dared not answer, in the

presence of so many witnesses, who would be tortured to condemn her to the padroni.

"*I* know!" blustered out a full-faced boy, who seemed all at once inspired with courage. "You see, signor! ef that girl, there, should get her guitar scratched a single bit, her padrone would flog her ever so hard!"

"He would, would he?" exclaimed the elder stranger, interposing with a stern, commanding voice: "I should like to see him do it!"

If a bomb-shell had fallen in that school-room, among those Italian children, they could not have been more excited than they were at this unexpected exclamation of that stranger. It startled them at once, as if with new and strange hopes.

Was there, then, indeed and in truth, *one* who dared to speak thus boldly of their wicked oppressors, the padroni? Were there others who felt as *he* did? Could they, really, be taken from the dens of the lions, and the paws of the bears? Might they, after all, escape from the snares of the fowlers, and from the nets of the hunters?

What a beautiful American light broke that moment into that little Italian school-room!

"Never fear!" said the younger stranger, in a voice equally firm, although not quite so stern. "You may go and get your guitar, my child. No one shall hurt you, while there is a true son or daughter of Italy in the world."

The guitar was very soon brought, and quietly laid on the school-room desk.

The stranger lifted it up gently, glanced his practiced eye rapidly along its strings, and, touching them with the hand of a master, he sang this song:

ITALY'S PRAYER FOR HER CHILDREN.

I.

GOD of the heavens! whose universal ear
Doth the young ravens' cry forever hear,
Hearken, while now Italia's children cry,
And answer from Thy gracious throne on high!

II.

How long? Oh! mighty Lord of hosts! how long
Are children hunted in Thy land of song?
How long, like lambs, be to the shambles led,
Ere Thy right arm strike down the hunters dead?

III.

Oh! Jesus! Mighty Saviour of the lost!
Who saved Thy twelve, on dark Tiberias tost,
From Superstition's mad and cruel sea,
Save Thou, O Christ! the waifs of Italy!

IV.

Oh! faithful Shepherd! Call Thou, as of old:
Gather these scattered lambs within Thy fold;
Smite Thou the wolves, with murderous hunger rife,
And feed Thy famished flock with Bread of Life!

They were Italian words, to an Italian tune. Some parts of the song were above the comprehension of the children; but they all knew the tune, and its familiar harmony sank into their young souls. It told them of Christ, of Galilee, of the Good Shepherd, and the Bread of Life; and they were all comforted.

A benediction, in Italian, followed this song; and the services at the Mission School were closed.

"Now," said old signor Guccioli, coming quietly forward, and addressing the two visitors, "let me take

you, with the children under our care, to our home, close by."

So saying he led the way out of the school-room, all his little flock of children following — Lucia and Lorette among the number.

"But first let me take you to the den."

"To the den?" asked the elder stranger, with an earnest look of inquiry.

"Come with us, and you shall see!" answered signor Guccioli.

CHAPTER XI.

THE DEN DESERTED.

And though he posted e'er so fast,
His fear was greater than his haste;
For fear, though fleeter than the wind,
Believes 't is always left behind.

Butler.

"THERE are two sick little ones here," said madame Guccioli, in a soft voice, addressing the strange visitors, as she entered with them the padroni den, "and I should like to have you see the poor things."

The den was in the same situation in which the padroni had left it, when they went off that holy sabbath morning to bury their murdered victim — Jose Maria Aquila.

All the children kept in the den, including Lucia and Lorette, were present. They had run back hurriedly to the dismal spot, not from love of it, but for fear their longer absence would be made known to the padroni, when they should return, as well as for sympathy with their fellow-sufferers. It is not impossible, also, that there was a feeling of curiosity in their young minds to see how the strange gentlemen would regard their place of suffering. Perhaps, too, there was a faint childish hope that something might be done by their countrymen for their relief.

On the spur of the moment, our two heroines began

a hasty adjustment of the den. It was in worse than characteristic confusion. The padroni had left it, if that were possible, in a greater than its usual disorder. In the centre of the room was the pile of bloody rags where the skeleton waif, poor Jose, had been whipped to death; and the pool that had streamed down from his gashed back and shoulders was still in its dark stains on the filthy floor. The contents of the rude boxes and lines, on which were thrown and suspended their wonted occupants of defiled and ragged clothes, were scattered in heaps and draggled around on every side. The old Italian organ, with its dingy gilt barrels turned up silently to the sabbath light, stood in its appointed place; while the familiar monkey, chattering with vexation and his confinement, and angry with long-continued hunger, leaped about at the utmost length of his chain.

Dust, dirt and gloom reigned everywhere supreme. But Lucia and Lorette did the best they could to set things to rights. They covered up all the deformities within their imperfect reach, adjusted their own dresses, and those of the smaller children, as well as they could; having come only a short time in advance for the purpose. It was the national taste of Italy in a foreign padroni den; making welcome to fitting representatives of Italy on American shores.

On separate mats of rags, in one of the dark corners of the den, lay a sick boy and girl. They were both suffering intense agony, rendered more intense by the long-continued neglect and cruelty of the padroni. A raging fever coursed through their veins, occasioned by their severe exposure to the storm which had been raging without — the same storm in which little Jose Maria, poor fellow! had been unable to earn his usual

stipend, and for the failure of which he had lost his life.

Both these sick children had been drenched through to their skins with the cold rain. Nobody had cared for them, out in the crowded streets. Nobody had invited them in to a warm fire to dry their wet clothes, or to feed their famishing bodies with a crust of bread. All they could do for themselves they had done. They had crept back, shivering with chills, and burning with heats, in alternate fits; with clinched teeth, and shrivelled hands, the sport of the busy crowd passing along, and the victims of the elements, which, cruel as they were, were less cruel, by far, than the hearts of the padroni who held them in this terrible bondage.

Madame Guccioli, the dear old Italian christian soul, flew to the side of the sufferers as fast as her feet could hurry her. She bent down closely over them, as tenderly as if they were her own little ones. In her kind and thoughtful charity, she had brought with her, as was her wont on all such occasions, a cup of warm macaroni broth.

Both these devoted people, Guccioli and his wife, were constantly doing such acts as these. They were never happier than when doing good to others. The whole neighborhood had come to regard them as angels of mercy. They were never tired of ministering to the suffering; literally, never weary in well doing.

Faint, yet expressive smiles of gratitude passed over the faces of the two sick children as they both drank of the proffered cup. It was, indeed, like the cup of life to them. A voice softly whispered in that dark den, at that moment:

'*Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, to visit the widows and fatherless in their affliction.*'

Nor were the two young Italian visitors one whit behind this good old couple. They knelt down beside them at the same soiled mat, on the same filthy floor, and steadied the tremulous hands of the venerable dame as she put the cup of strengthening to the parched lips of the sufferers. They followed her sweet words of consolation with other kindred words of their own. The whole quartette of mercy extemporized a prayer-meeting on the spot. Their voices softly and sweetly joined in a consoling and christian song, adapted to a familiar Italian air; and then, together, they lifted their hearts in supplication to that God who, in all countries, in all ages, is the hearer and answerer of prayer.

Lonely, pitiful and forlorn had been hitherto the career of that room full of Italian children in the commercial metropolis of America. Their throbbing hearts were always just ready to break with unmitigated suffering. People called them nothing but street Arabs; dirty little pilferers, who would steal everything they could lay their hands upon; sly liars and petty frauds, and bummers, whose words were forever unreliable. But the Gucciolis, and others like them, had found out that these same wandering waifs had the same human hearts as other people had; hearts sometimes a great deal more tender and lips much more reliable than those of many of the multitude who spoke of them so flippantly, and who passed them by on the other side with such indifference.

A crowd of other Italian waifs stood around looking on. Some of them were the children of parents who had once been in good circumstances. Caught in the whirl of the revolutions that have at so many different times visited their country, these parents had gone

down in the vortex of poverty. All their property had been swept away, as with the besom of destruction. In the passage of these whirlwinds their families had been broken up, in some instances their houses burned over their heads, and they reduced to penury and want. They and their children had been driven for a precarious livelihood to the cold charity of the bustling streets. In many, many pitiful cases, parents and children had been torn ruthlessly asunder, never again to meet on earth. Some of these children standing there had not seen their parents for years; and nearly every one of the number never expected to see them again.

How soothing, how angelic, how Christ-like, were the visits to this afflicted company of signor and madame Guccioli! How often had this aged couple been ministers of mercy to this hunted flock! Now, too, came the two strangers, on the same blessed errand, and moved by the same good spirit. It was like pouring rays of sunshine through the portals of the tomb — or the fragrance of sweet flowers in the chambers of the sick and dying.

These poor Italian children were so lonely! They seldom played with one another, as happy children play in happy homes. They were constantly under the servitude of padronism; and never knew what unconstrained pleasure really was. Mirth was to them almost a total stranger. Mental improvement was a thing utterly unknown. From morning to night it was drudge, drudge, drudge! From night to morning it was sleep out the dark and weary hours, that the sleepers, early roused, might be forced to drudge again.

All around them, in the streets and alleys, in the yards and parks, in the market-places and along the docks, were strange American children, dressed in a

strange garb, and speaking a strange language. From the great houses, with their swell fronts, from the gateways of tall churches, from the portals of stores, and offices, and manufactories, from railway depots and piers by the water-side, nearly every one looked on the Italian waif with a feeling akin to suspicion, mingled slightly with pity and largely with contempt. What wonder that such strange children should become the early victims of popular vices; that their wayward feet should get entangled in the dark, wild woods of social evils; and that they should speedily drift into the poor-house, the prison and the grave?

"Why is not this cruel captivity of Italian children to the Italian padroni at once broken up and forever destroyed?"

So asked of themselves these two sons of Italy, as they entered this padrone den in the city of New York.

They soon learned that the padroni would not be back until late in the day — perhaps not for all night. The possession of ill-gotten money, the earnings wrung from the exposure of their unfortunate victims, acting on their own idle and vicious habits, had led them into dissipation more and more. They were now habitual drunkards; and frequently spent all the hard earnings they stole from the children in gambling and its kindred vices Signor Guccioli, with his quiet and gentle spirit, hinted that the two men might be long delayed, and that a good opportunity was thus providentially presented their kind visitors for being useful to the children. As soon as possible, therefore, the stray waifs were gathered together again, and talking and singing in the dear old tongue of Italy occupied the passing hours.

"So, you are from Florence?" said the younger of

the two strangers, addressing Lucia and Lorette, as they stood side by side.

"Yes, signor," answered Lucia, with a curtesy.

"In what part of Florence did you live?" he continued.

"O! down close by the Arno, not far from the Bridge *La Santa Trinita.*"

"In what house?" he asked.

"O! in the *Mansion di Lapo*, signor."

"The *Mansion di Lapo!*" said he, with a pleased look. "I have been by it many a time; and once I went inside to examine, as a fine work of art, one of the rose windows."

"We often admired the beautiful things left by its builder," interposed Lorette, modestly. She was a genuine lover of art, and had frequently before expressed her admiration of the works of the great artist.

"I used to love to go over to Florence, with my uncle, from Naples. I was born in Naples, as I told you; and lived before I was stole — I was brought — that is — before I came to America, with the old family on the hill of the *via Romana.* Ah! I know Florence well," said Antoine.

"O! is n't that nice?" exclaimed Lucia, enthusiastically interrupting the speaker. Then instantly correcting herself, she blushed, and remained silent and listening.

"Many a time," he resumed, not at all displeased with the childish interruption, "I have scanned the elegant statues on the Bridge *La Santa Trinita,* and paid my tribute of admiration to the wonderful genius of our countryman, Di Lapo."

'*Our* countryman, Di Lapo!' how delightfully sounded in the ears of these poor wanderers in a foreign land the

emphasis laid by their fellow countryman, on these few words!

"There were the Grand Galleries, too. I felt when a boy I never saw anything like them; and I have often thought the same since then," he said. "Have you ever been in Pisa, children?"

"O! yes, signor!" replied Lucia, with her usual alacrity. Then, suddenly checking herself, at a look from Lorette, she as quickly added: "Only, though, as we came through to Leghorn, on our way to America."

"That's the same way I came," the stranger resumed, not heeding the momentary confusion of Lucia. "Did you notice the Leaning Tower, at Pisa?" he asked.

"O! yes, signor!" responded Lucia, still loving to be the chief speaker on her side. "Wasn't it wonderful? To think it should be so high, and so heavy, and lean so far, and not topple over?"

"Very wonderful, indeed," the stranger added. "That is what makes the Leaning Tower one of the wonders of the world."

"Such a tall tower!" exclaimed Lucia, for the moment forgetting her situation, and the sorrows that crushed her down; "and such a great circle of pillars, and arches, standing out there, all alone. O! how I wish I was back there again!"

"Don't you want to be there, too?" asked the stranger of Lorette.

"Yes, signor!" she replied; adding, with unwonted emphasis, "*indeed* I do! I should like, still more, to be back in Florence!"

"And *I*, too!" cried Lucia, as if she, also, had been addressed by the stranger's question.

"I am glad to hear you both say so," he resumed,

with a genial smile. "Perhaps both of you—I hope all four of us here now—will be returned some day to dear old Italy!"

As the young man said this his face glowed with a warm flush, while his fine dark Italian eyes shone with brilliant lustre.

"You must count me in as one of the party!" suddenly exclaimed the senior stranger, moving close up to the side of his junior companion. "When brother Antoine, here, goes back to our own Italy, I shall certainly go with him, if I am alive!"

"Yes! brother, yes! whenever we return to that well-beloved land, we will surely return together—if a kind providence so permit."

"Please, signor," again interrupted Lucia, in her eagerness to express the delight she felt in hearing more about Italy, in her own tongue, and from such agreeable countrymen, "do you think that anybody ever lived in the Leaning Tower, at Pisa?"

"Why, yes," he replied; "there is no doubt that persons once occupied it, as a temple of a certain class."

"But there don't anybody live in it, now?"

"Not as permanent inhabitants—only a small company of guardians of it, as a world's curiosity. You must know, children, that the Leaning Tower is nearly two hundred feet high up in the air. The topmost story overhangs the lowest one nearly twenty feet."

"O my!" exclaimed Lucia, once more forgetting herself in her surprise of pleasure. "I don't think I should ever like to live in such a leaning-over house—indeed I should n't!"

Thus passed in lively conversation the introduction of the strange visitors. It was a pleasant epoch to all concerned.

There was a look of seriousness on the faces of the strangers. It might be said that the elder of the two wore a mien of determination that indicated the presence in his soul of a solemn and fixed purpose. He seated himself on an empty macaroni box, and sent a fixed gaze of his black eyes ranging around the room. As he glanced from object to object his mental excitement visibly increased, so that he could retain his seat in quiet no longer. He sprang forward with an energetic bound, as he spoke in Italian:

"My God!" he exclaimed, with reverent emphasis, "is it possible that this is the home of the children of Italy, in the christian city of New York?"

His attitude, as he spoke, gave assurance of the wish within him that this foul den of infamy and oppression might be levelled with the ground, and that the wicked system of child-hunting pursued so long by Italian padroni might perish with it.

Old signor and madame Guccioli at once perceived his emotions, and instinctively divined their purport.

"It is, indeed, a dreadful place," said the venerable and kind-hearted nurse, "and the signor and I are doing what we can. Italian ladies and gentlemen, residing here in New York, and others in Italy, under the sanction and support of the Italian government, are doing all that is at present available for these poor fellow-creatures, and others like them. But, ah!" exclaimed the good dame, with a sigh, "the sufferers are so many in number, and the available means are so small!"

"We must all do all we can!" said the youngest visitor, the warm tears filling and running over from his eyes. "Let us remember that we are accepted for what we have, and not for what we have not. If we do our best, it is the best that we can do."

"Yes!" exclaimed the elder, with his hands clinched, his teeth firmly set, and his raven eye flashing: "that is all right. I will go as far as they who go farthest in assuaging the sorrows that are begotten and born of the cruel padronism of Italy and America. But, at the same time, I am firmly resolved to do all I can to dry up the wicked sources of this rolling tide of disgrace and wrong. Stop the fountains from flowing, and you dry up the streams."

"Amen!" exclaimed the aged signor Guccioli, with an emphasis unusual with him. The soul of the brave old patriot was fairly roused at the manner of his young Italian visitor, and he would not restrain the nobler impulses of his nature. "Amen to that, with all my heart!"

The venerable philanthropist spoke as if he had the whole christian and patriotic world at his back.

With other kindred words of counsel and encouragement the remainder of the day wore on. Plain refreshments were brought in from a neighboring bakery, supplemented with social cups of tea and coffee from the friendly inn of the Guccioli's. The poor, half-starved children partook freely, with an unwonted relish. It was a gladsome sight to see them enjoy the cheer so abundantly provided. They all ate and drank as they had never done before in America. Nor were the sick sufferers forgotten, in the general joy. Nice little comforts were discreetly furnished them, and their weary hearts were made glad with welcome sounds and thoughts of home, far away. The dreary den was lighted up with a strange radiance, and filled with the innocent merriment of grateful youth and benevolent old age.

A tottering table stood up against the slimy wall. It

was near the only door of the den, and the struggling sabbath light that came up the low, dirty alley fell dimly upon it. Here the strangers paused. Among the low piles of papers and other dusty articles that lay scattered upon it, was a rude account-book. It lay full open to view. The entries were widely scrawled in the Italian and French languages. It was a schedule of the daily earnings of the children of the den. The receipts on each greasy page, torn, frittered and stained alternately with the juice and burned with the fires of tobacco, were signed alternately by Vincens and Gambrina.

From the distorted figures of this dirty volume — all the recent entries of which showed that the villains must have been drunk when they wrote them down — it appeared that the earnings of the victims of the padroni amounted, for the previous month, to nearly seven hundred dollars! The two most successful children were entered "76" and "77"— Lucia and Lorette. Their charming Italian ballads had won the way to many genuine American hearts; and the responses had been proportionately liberal. At the bottom of these expressive figures, that denoted our own heroines for a given period, was the entry: "100 fl.;" standing for the generous sum of one hundred florins — not one cent of which had these good and gifted little artists ever received. A very small stipend of the amount was compelled to be paid, as per contract, to the merchant, Marina, and the captain, Del Paso, at Florence. The parents were cheated the same as their children, and received the same — nothing!

The senior Italian gentleman scanned this infamous padroni account with a scrutinizing eye. He discovered, at a glance, the utter dishonesty of these two scoundrels, in this matter of money receipts, as

he had already found out their inhumanity in other ways of treating these helpless children, hunted from his own Italy.

As he read on, from page to page, of the large sums that had been earned, through so much suffering, by Lucia and Lorette, his manly indignation scarcely knew bounds. He felt, on the spur of the moment, like tearing the cruel record, wet and red as it was with the tears and blood of poor Italian children, and casting it into the fire. Then he remembered the work of his mission, and that copies he might and would make from these villanous transactions would yet be conclusive evidence at the proper time and in the proper place.

Here, before his eyes, was the proof of the violation of the solemn and binding obligation which the scoundrel Vincens had made with the unsuspecting parents of Lucia and Lorette. Here, too, in another part of the same book, written in the French language — of which the villain Gambrina was totally ignorant — were other entries by Vincens, showing that he was not only deliberately cheating the children, and their parents and his partners in robbery abroad, but his own fellow villain, Gambrina! He actually stole over again the hard-earned money of the poor victims of his rascality, and put two-thirds of the gross amount in his own pocket.

Here, indeed, was a new discovery of the outrageous villany of Italian padronism. The young stranger stood erect with righteous anger at this table of robbery, and denounced it, and the whole vile system, before high Heaven. From the bottom of his soul he invoked the curse of God, and of all the good, to rest upon it.

He at once called the attention of his companion, who was also, like himself, an accomplished French scholar, to these abominable entries, as they held them up and scanned them together in the light of that holy morning.

The Gucciolis had told the two strangers all they knew, or could tell, of the story of the wrongs of the children. But the great record of it was on high. Enough was known here on earth, however, to stimulate these and other friends of Italy to renewed exertions on behalf of her suffering little ones. The two strangers were especially interested in Lucia and Lorette. They listened with deep feeling to the tale of their virtual abduction from Florence, and subsequent privations in New York.

"Ah!" said the younger of the visitors, "yours is indeed a sad, sad story. But, alas! there are so many like it! There is, I hope, deliverance for you, and for them, even in this wicked world. Surely there is a God who judgeth in the earth; and though hand join in hand, yet shall not the wicked go unpunished."

While the younger visitor was uttering these and other words of christian counsel and encouragement to the children, the elder one had seized the ink-daubed pen from the cracked and dust-covered stand on the table, and smoothing down as best he could a rumpled page of the blank account-book of the padroni, he wrote as follows:

[TRANSLATION.]

"CITY OF NEW YORK, U. S. A.,
June 3d, 18—.

"TO MARCO VINCENS AND BRUTA GAMBRINA:

"*Italian padroni;*—I am an Italian. I know you both. Marco Vincens! I know you especially. We met more than once in Italy. We have met, since then, in America. Should we never meet again in this

world — for we may not, as your crimes may soon cut you off in your guilty career — I will appear as a swift witness against you, face to face, in the dread world to come.

"I was by your side, Vincens, as a disguised attendant, when you took on your soul that dark vow to return to the captain del Paso his share of the earnings of these poor children he helped you to seduce from their parents in Florence. Yes! I was there, Vincens, though you knew it not, in those mysterious vaults of the cathedral *di Santa Maria.* I was the guide, without your knowledge, who conducted you to the secluded spot where you took your awful oath. No one but the Great Unseen knew that I was there at that moment.

"I was present, as a secret guest, at the drunken carnival in the house of the merchant Marina, in Florence, when you bound your soul by such an oath as only such an artful villain and miser as he could frame and impose on his fellow-man.

"Marco Vincens! How have you kept that oath to pay back the money Marina advanced for the outfit and passage of the two children, Lucia and Lorette? Remember! you must answer this question to your God! Above all, how shamefully, how cruelly, have you robbed these and other unprotected children of Italy!

"Infamous man! In this book is the record of your villany. Think not that you can escape the copy that has now been taken, in the name of justice.

"In the same ship in which you came as an emigrant from Leghorn, with that helpless brood of Italian children completely in your wicked power, I came, in the garb of the calling of my honored father — that of a sailor. You did not know me; but full well I knew you, and always closely watched you. I had made a solemn promise, at a holy altar, that I would do so. Faithfully I have kept that sacred vow, hitherto; I shall so keep it to the end!

"I have known of your treachery, Vincens! to these wandering waifs, here in America. Now I have proof of your rascality to your own vile partners in infamy. Think not, for one moment, that you can or will escape.

There is an Almighty Power above that forever controls you. Mark it, Vincens! mark it well.

"It was my voice that startled you from the unseen perch in the gallery over the old entrance of Castle Garden. You remember how I then and there reminded you of your bargains to sell the earnings of these hunted little ones to the sly captain, and the gambling merchant at Florence. You cannot have forgotten it.

"Another vile partner of your guilt is here — the atrocious Bruta Gambrina. He, too, is well known among the administrators of justice in Italy, and is wanted there. His disguise is not sufficient to cover up his dark deeds. He is sure, finally, of detection and punishment.

"You two villains have gone to the graveyard, to lay in the silent dust there your murdered victim — the almost infant Jose Maria Aquila. But the blood of that dead child, like the blood of Abel to Cain, will cry out against you from the ground!

"Padroni! both of you look on the opposite wall! Read there the inscription you cannot fail to understand; the sentence of your own doom!

"You may rub out that line from before human eyes; but it is written, as with a finger of fire, on your own guilty consciences; it is indelibly engraved by the recording angel in the judgment-book of God!

"Since I first took upon me the vow of the *Carbonari*, I have become, I humbly hope, a sincere christian. It is in the spirit of Christ I am now carrying that stern vow into execution.

"'*Vengeance is Mine; I will repay, saith the Lord.*'

"In the name of the holy God, padroni! I call on you, here and now, to give up your wicked practice of hunting and enslaving Italian children.

"The traffic and dens of the Italian padroni must and shall be destroyed.

"ONE OF THE CARBONARI."

Below this fearful indictment, written also in Italian, in a less bold but evidently equally firm hand, was this additional note. It bore the same date:

"*Padroni!* The writer of these lines accompanied the writer of the above to your horrid den.

"All that he has here expressed, I most fully indorse.

"Our hands and hearts are linked inseparably together in the good work of abolishing forever every vestige of Italian padronism.

"I, too, know what your detestable calling is in Italy. I know what it is in America. It is doomed by the christianity of the world, and cannot much longer survive.

"May it never have a resurrection!

"ANTOINE ROSSELLI LAFARGE.

"*Once a hunted Italian child, and held captive for years by padrone Alphonso Caruso.*"

The inscription on the opposite wall of the den, referred to by the first writer, was in these words, in Italian:

"VENGEANCE TO THE WOLVES THAT DEVOUR THE LAMBS!"

This is the motto of the *Carbonari*, a patriotic society of Italy. Deep black lines were drawn around it. The words were printed in characteristic bold Roman capitals.

The strangers departed from the den. Just as they were passing out, the elder one reached up over the table and snatched rapidly down the likeness of Garibaldi, that had been hanging on the wall. For a moment he held it, at arm's length, in both hands, gazing intently upon it, as the warm tears gushed from his fixed eyes. Then carefully removing the picture, he hung the frame back in its place on the wall, legibly tracing these Italian words on the back:

NO PLACE
IN A
PADRONI DEN
FOR A
LIKENESS
OF
GARIBALDI.

Lying on the account-book, in a sealed envelope, bearing, in miniature, the arms of Italy, was the exact cost of the picture, in current American money. With a respectful adieu to the good old couple, signor Guccioli and madame Guccioli, and after being repeatedly curtesied to by the girls, and as repeatedly cheered by the boys, the strangers withdrew from the den.

As soon as everything was as well arranged as in such a place it could be, the Gucciolis kissed the children good-night, and withdrew to their homes — leaving the den to its wonted night darkness, its sighs, its silence and its tears.

CHAPTER XII.

THE PARTNERS IN ITALY.

He that has light within his own clear breast,
May sit i' the centre, and enjoy bright day;
But he who hides a dark soul and foul thoughts,
Benighted walks under the mid-day sun;
Himself is his own dungeon.

Milton.

TWO years have now passed away. We are once more back in Italy.

The price of blood had been paid, drop by drop, to Marina. Much the greater part, even of this, had been withheld by the thieves, Vincens and Gambrina. Their promised remittances from New York to Florence had become few and far between; and of these but the merest pittances ever reached the families at the *Mansion di Lapo*. All that Marina could take he greedily took, and held with a keen miser's grasp. The waifs had nothing; the parents had next to nothing; the merchant and the captain were cheated, as much as it was possible for such shrewd characters to be. All the rest of the rich ill-gotten gains the unprincipled padroni took to themselves. The means for many a drunken bout, many a gambling fracas, this plundered child-money supplied. No wonder such wretches as Vincens and Gambrina were exasperated at its loss; no wonder they should whip to death the poor, weak child,

Jose Maria, when they thought he withheld a part of it.

Mrs. Garcia, during the last trying year, had been sinking more and more deeply in the vortex of drunkenness and kindred dissipation. Her now frequent indulgences were telling sadly on her habits and health. She had grown habitually neglectful of her family, and was frequently away from home. She had become sullen, peevish and morose. Her husband was an object of her especial dislike, which she did not hesitate to manifest on frequent occasions. He, in turn, sought to drown his chagrin and anger in deep libations of the poisonous bowl. The son, still a sailor at sea, had ceased to make any reports of his whereabouts, or to show by messages of any kind that he took any interest in his father, or mother, or the rest of the household. From the intemperate course of his parents the younger son, at home, had learned to love the intoxicating cup — the deadliest bane of Italy. As for Lucia they scarcely knew where she was, or whether she were alive or dead.

Is it any wonder that these people went astray? Victims of the twin evils of ignorance and superstition, enveloped in clouds of darkness and delusion, they were the easy dupes of the wicked and designing. How could even affectionate and careful parents be sure of protecting their lambs against the wolves that were constantly and everywhere prowling about, seeking to devour them? How much less were tender flocks to be protected, when parents were themselves deformed to ravenous beasts, made drunk and furious by the demon of strong drink? What victims bound on the altar of padronism, for human sacrifice, do such parents become! When shall the christianity and

civilization of the world tear this hideous altar down, and thus cause these fearful sacrifices to be known no more but in the sad memories of the past?

Manuel and Marguerite Garcia had now spent nearly all of their small earnings. Their dissipations had reduced them to beggary.

Alas! this guilty couple were yet in the strong fetters of bondage and vice. Their souls had not yet been emancipated by the illuminating torch that is now penetrating beautiful Italy. True education had not reached the classic halls of the old and splendid mansion in which they were the humble and degraded tenants. Like many other Italians they lived on the fallen glories of the past. They did not reach forth to the noble aspirations of the present and the holy promises of the future. As Roman ages had done before them they revelled in indulgence and rioted in excess.

Surely, it is no wonder they continued in the vassalage of padronism, and that their children were hunted through the world.

Thus deluded, thus waylaid in the voyage of life, these poor dupes of ignorance and slavery were drifting on hopeless wrecks to the great ocean of eternity.

One evening, as the two families were sitting and chatting together at *Di Lapo*, a stranger entered. They were in the front room of the Garcias. He had come in quietly, and unannounced. By some means, unknown to any of the little circle present, he had become well acquainted with the personal history of the two families. He knew the names of the parents, and of their children. He was aware of the absence of Lucia and Lorette in America. He had become specially interested in the progress — small as it really was — which

the Ferenzas had made in the ways of a living christian faith.

There was something in the appearance of this stranger that at once won its way to the confidence of all in the room. His look was so benignant, his bearing was so much that of the perfect gentleman, his tone was so spiritual and yet so cheerful, that every one present immediately felt that he was a person in whom it was safe to confide.

In appearance he was large and commanding; a little above the ordinary stature, with an erect form, broad shoulders, and a large, round head; with a pleasant mouth, and full, clear, expressive eyes. The face was indicative of mingled firmness and gentleness, and wore a look of genial vivacity, that might at times be expected to broaden into a flow of humor. His hair was not thick, but smooth, and adjusted with good taste over his fine-cut forehead.

Immediately he had entered and taken a calm survey of the room, its surroundings and inmates, all the company rose as if impelled by a common impulse.

"Be seated, friends," he said, in a quiet, self-collected tone of voice, at the same time laying his hat, gloves and cane on a contiguous table. "This is not a visit of ceremony," he continued, in the same placid tone; "it is simply a friendly call. I am happy to see you all here together. A mutual friend of yours and mine has prepared the way for me to introduce myself to you on this occasion. I refer to a christian lady, from the United States of America, who informed me of her having given one of the children of one of your families a little American religious book, printed in Italian."

"O! it was Lorette!" exclaimed Mrs. Ferenza, rising with a curtesy, and a face beaming with pleasure,

"The same," he replied. "Lorette Ferenza. Your daughter, I presume?"

"Yes, signor," Mrs. Ferenza responded, rising and curtesying again.

"We 're glad to see you, father," interrupted Mr. Ferenza, "with news from our dear Lorette. We are always glad to meet with those who have seen our well-beloved child."

"You mistake, my friends, in two particulars. You mistake in addressing me as 'father.' I am not now a priest — in the sense in which you regard the priesthood — although I once was. Neither have I seen your daughter; though I recently met with those who have."

"What, signor!" quickly broke in Mrs. Ferenza, "seen her in America?"

"Yes, signora! seen her in the city of New York!" the stranger slowly responded. "Yes; as well — as — could be expected — away from home," was the gentle reply.

There was something in the tone of the stranger that touched the hearts of all who listened — especially those of Mr. and Mrs. Ferenza.

The visitor discovered that he was treading on tender ground, and that his steps required the utmost caution.

"I am from France," he continued, as he took the proffered seat, and modulated his voice differently; "although I am familiar with all parts of Italy. I have, also, had the pleasure of being in America, not long ago; although I was not so — happy —" here the stranger paused a brief moment — "as to see either of your children there."

A look of disappointment passed over the features of the parents; but, with true Italian courtesy, they listened with characteristic Italian respect to what further he had to say.

F. Hyacinth.

As he rose from his chair, and, removing his hat and cane, was about taking his departure, Mr. Ferenza advanced toward the kind visitor, and said politely:

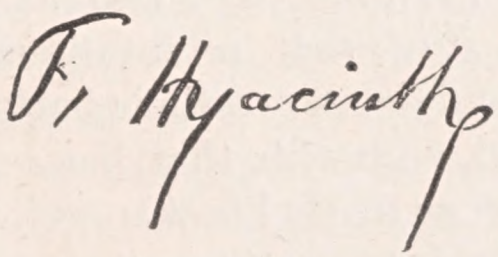
"Come again and see us, signor. Please come again."

"Yes, signor," added Mrs. Ferenza, with a fond maternal sigh; "we shall be so glad to hear all you can tell us from our dear child in America."

Mr. and Mrs. Garcia said nothing. Conscious guilt and hypocrisy kept them dumb.

"I certainly shall look carefully after all the children of Italy, whenever and wherever I can," replied the stranger, with a benignant look of christian concern. "Italy, like France, my own beloved country, has many suffering wanderers over the face of the earth. It is a great pleasure to know that the great Father of us all cares for them all. I have confidence to believe that the official representatives of the Italian government in America will do their duty in this important national concern. To my certain knowledge there are Italian merchants, and others, in the United States, who are closely watching the infamous system of padronism. It must be broken up!" added he, with marked emphasis. "Good-bye, dear friends. You shall hear from me again. Here is my card."

The stranger departed. As the door of the ancient *Mansion di Lapo* closed upon him, the little company left behind gathered in the dim light of the classic window, and read the following name:



CHAPTER XIII.

END OF GAMBRINA.

'Though hand join in hand, yet shall not the wicked go unpunished.'—*Holy Writ.*

AT the appointed hour, the padroni, Vincens and Gambrina, started out from their den to bury the dead boy—Jose Maria. The place of burial was in a retired graveyard across the East River. Their suspicious and wary natures led them to take every necessary precaution to secure the interment of the body according to law.

With characteristic cunning, they stopped, on their way to the ferry, at one of their old haunts,—an Italian pawnbroker's shop,—and trimmed their battered hats with dirty strips of dingy black crape.

Hypocritical mourners! The rude black coffin that the authorities allowed them to bear together to the grave, was accompanied by the semblance of funeral gear. So these atrocious villains supplied the place of their greasy slouched caps with shabby-genteel second-hand hats, around which they tied long strips of second-hand black stuff, that ostentatiously trailed over their bent-up shoulders down their backs.

Thus equipped, and with that hang-dog look which adepts in murderous deeds know so well how to assume, they launched out into the sabbath streets, and steered for the nearest ferry..

They were not long in reaching the ferry-boat. But as it had just left the dock for the other side of the river, an excuse was afforded for slily entering one of the many drink-hells infesting that part of New York. The one they entered was kept by a swarthy Italian, who knew these and all other padroni well. He was an expert in ministering to their base passions. Knowing how easily these consummate scoundrels wrung all their money from helpless Italian children, this kindred villain had a kind of infernal satisfaction in getting all he could of it from them, easier still. What they extorted from the poor children by fraud and cruelty, in their den, the liquor-seller still more cunningly abstracted from them by the fraud and deceit of his bar. Drinking and gambling were his forte; and most skilfully and most successfully he plied his devilish arts.

It was in such fastnesses of guilt as these that the Italian child-hunters were at bay. Here, in the secrecy of dark screens, and within closely-folding doors, they doled out in games of chance the earnings and gifts of their deluded prey. The more the children gained, through their much suffering, in streets and parks, the more the padroni had to squander in gambling-hells. The more the gamblers lost at play, the more they forced the children on in their paths of hunger and privation; the more they tortured and robbed them.

How many offerings made to these pitiful children in the thoroughfares of the great cities of the world, go into the tills of the gamblers, and the dealers in strong drinks! Many a heartless blow had wrung money from the wandering musicians, that was being squandered in these purlieus of drunkenness and gambling. The pilfers on these gaming-tables, and on the count-

ers of these bars, were all wet with the tears and red with the blood of hunted and slaughtered children.

So the padroni at once brought out their cards and dice, and the bar-tender supplied them with his burning draughts. So the cards shuffled, and the dice rattled, while hunted children hungered and thirsted for food and drink; shivered in the cold, fevered in the heat, sank down and died.

The padroni stood up in his coffin, cold and stark, the corpse of Jose Maria. The little child was scarcely noticed in the dark corner, for the pine box that held him was black, like the panel of the room, with garish paint. A silent witness within those coarse boards, he could suffer no more at the bloody hands of Italian padroni. The little fingers of the young violinist were moveless now; but they will be lifted up to testify against those murderers before the bar of the Judgment Day. The soft voice was still now; but it will speak out, in thunder tones, when summoned to bear its record before the Judge of the quick and the dead. The soft, blue eyes were closed now; but they will open wide, as the light of eternity shall shine upon them; and they shall look, face to face, on their atrocious Italian padroni, whose cruel hands had set them with the cold seal of the grave.

Poor little Jose Maria! No more hungering; no more thirsting; no more filthy rags; no more pallet of straw; no more cold winter storms; no more fierce summer heats; no more cruel scourgings; no more sickness; no more death.

It was meet that these drunken murderers of childish innocence, these gambling assassins of helpless waifs, should drink and gamble in the coffined presence of the boy they had slain. So the drinking and gaming went

on, through all the morning of that holy day. The sabbath-bell called to the worship of God; but it was no call to them. They heeded it not. The cards shuffled; the dice rattled; the cup poured; and yet they had not left the margin of the ferry; yet they were no nearer to the burial-ground.

At last, now nearly if not quite drunk, and scarcely able to stand, the padroni sallied out of the grog-shop with the corpse of their victim. They placed the coffin near the door of the cabin, at the far end of the ferry-boat. At the foot sat Vincens; at the head, Gambrina.

As the bow of the ferry-boat touched the dock, they both rose from their seats, seized the corpse, and staggered through the doorway to the landing platform. The boat was yet some feet from the wharf. The water of the dock, stirred up by the paddles, was lashed into foam, and the waves tossed the vessel up and down with an unsteady motion, as the passengers made the usual rush for the shore. In the crowd the padroni were urged along, still holding on the coffin. Being too drunk to recover themselves they both reeled over, and plunged headlong into the boiling water.

"Men overboard!" the cry sounded. "Back the boat! Back her!"

As soon as possible the wheels were reversed, and the vessel moved out from the dock.

Too late! The two men sank like lead out of sight. The paddles passed over them, and not a struggle was seen, not a sound was heard, where they had both gone down in the vortex. The filth and slime stirred up from the depths of the dock whirled on above them, and still they rose not.

In an instant more the eddy brought them to the surface, whirling by the side of the slippery piles.

There was no hold for them, even if they had been sober enough to stretch out to it. There was no way of reaching down, in such a raging mass of waves, to give them succor.

As they swept rapidly by on the bubbling, hissing torrent, Gambrina was seen for a moment, frantically lifting up his hands, in one of which he held the black iron handle that he had wrenched from the coffin as he fell overboard. Vincens next appeared, a few feet from him, struggling violently in the foam, and gasping with the last convulsive efforts of a drowning man. All in vain! The retreating boat carried them both out of the dock, to where the strong current of the passing river was sweeping on to sea. Here the eddy seized them both, and held them writhing at the corner of the slippery pier, and then whirled them to and fro, as if they were in the grip of an executioner, who was wreaking vengeance upon them. A boat-hook in the strong hands of a sailor, near by, caught Vincens by the collar, and dragged him to the dock; but Gambrina, swept off by an incoming surge, sank to rise no more.

The coffin, by a sudden motion of the boat, had been saved from falling over. A police-officer, standing by, took possession of it, and removed it to a private room at the ferry-house. Here it was safely deposited, and guarded, waiting for further inquiries.

The hand of God still cared for the murdered lad. By a mysterious circumstance, a card had been attached to the coffin, in some unexplained manner, containing, in rude, but plain English, the name and address of the good old signor Guccioli.

Providentially, one of the police-officers present—among whom, especially in Brooklyn, there are so

many worthy men — took charge of the coffin. In due time it was removed to the hospitable home of the Gucciolis. Here, as the children of the padroni den gathered fondly around it, and other children of the Italian Mission School united with them, the murdered little waif had a christian funeral. He was followed to his humble grave by a company of as sincere mourners as ever walked the earth; and received, what the poor child so well deserved, a becoming christian burial.

CHAPTER XIV.

END OF VINCENS AND THE DEN.

He who will fight the devil at his own weapon, must not wonder if he find him an overmatch.— *South.*

THE drowning of Gambrina sobered Vincens. A Brooklyn policeman took him in charge.

Confused and stupid as he was, he could still give an account of his name and residence. With his usual consummate cunning, he fabricated a story with regard to his being found in possession of a corpse.

The officer forthwith proceeded with the culprit back to New York. He stopped sufficiently long at the ferry-house fire to dry the guilty and trembling wretch, who was scarcely able to walk.

The way to the den was easily travelled, however, and here the policeman left his villanous charge. But Vincens was still the same miserable slave as ever. He crept back to the den with the same horrid purposes in his dark soul, hungering and thirsting as much as ever for the gratification of the wickedness of padronism.

The hour was late, when, after having indulged again in drinks at a neighboring bar-room, this abandoned man sought the gloom and seclusion of the den. The place was in total darkness. The children, as might be expected, were all present. Not one of them, indeed, ever dared to be absent. The day had been

to them one of extraordinary pleasure; and after the kind words of signor and madame Guccioli they had retired with unusual cheerfulness to their dingy beds.

In the midst of the darkness, Vincens might be dimly seen groping in a drunken stupor blindly about, muttering incoherently to himself:

"Gambrina 's gone, eh? Well! Let him go! Who cares? I sha'n't try to find him! Eh? At the bottom of the river, eh? Fishes get him, eh? Ugh!"

So he mumbled on to himself, stumbling and staggering around the den in the dark.

Coming across the stump of one of his cast-off cigars, he fumbled in his ragged pocket and found a match. Lighting it, and giving as many rapid puffs as his limited breath would allow, he proceeded to the old shattered ruins of his kerosene lamp, and, after repeated drunken trials, succeeded in lighting that. By the flickering glare that fell in uncertain flashes around he reeled up to the table near the door. Here the first object that met his bewildered gaze was the inscription left on the wall overhead by the two Italian strangers:

"To Marco Vincens
and
"Bruta Gambrina,
"*Italian Padroni:*

"VENGEANCE TO THE WOLVES THAT DEVOUR THE LAMBS!"

For some moments the cold villain stood transfixed to the spot. Then his trembling eye caught the signature below, that had hitherto escaped him:

"One of the Carbonari."

At sight of this he burst out in uncontrollable rage:

"'Gambrina,' eh? No 'Gambrina' here! Gone down the harbor! Fishes eat him up! Ugh! '*One of the Carbonari?*' Who cares for the Carbonari? Eh? 'He watch—s me?' Eh? Let him watch! Who cares? Eh?"

Then he hurried through the mysterious writing in the account-book, angrily exclaiming to himself:

"Eh? *What's* this? Who's been here? *Who's* been writing in my book? Eh?"

Snatching up the memorandum, that he thought had been kept so secret, and seeing that it had all been read and computed by a French scholar, his rage knew no bounds. With an hysterical laugh, he burst out again:

"Ha! ha! ha! Spy of old Marina? So! so! Spy of sly signor—captain del Paso? Ha! ha! Let them come on! They'll find that 'wolves' have sharp teeth! These *Carbonari* think they're mighty smart people! P'haps we'll show 'em padroni great deal smarter! Ha! My ancestors hav'n't trafficked in Italian children two hundred years for nothing! Eh? Ha! ha!"

But the guilty wretch trembled all over from head to foot, as he muttered these fearful maledictions. He felt in his soul that the avenger of blood was on his track, and that there was no city of refuge to which he could flee.

With a hurried hand he put down the lamp, and glared around the room, on the still sleeping children. The poor creatures were tossing to and fro in their uneasy slumbers; but not one of them awoke sufficiently to occupy his attention enough to be even cursed by him. He was almost too drunk for that, and quite too busy with other wicked thoughts.

"*All* here!" he went on muttering to himself. "All

here, but — *one* — but — *two* — eh? Neither one of 'em much missed! Eh? Ha! ha! As for the little brat, *he's* not worth counting, any how! Eh? Where's my jolly black bottle? Anything left in't, I wonder? Let's try it, and see!"

Reaching over among the piles of rags, and searching in the dim light, he snatched the coveted article, which yet held a supply of the deadly liquor, and drank off every drop, without taking the neck of the bottle from his mouth.

With the lighted lamp in his hand the miserable drunkard had sunk down in a torrent of blasphemy, and was soon loudly snoring. But the fountain of remorse was broken up from its dark deeps within his guilty soul. He rolled and tumbled frantically about, gesticulating and muttering madly to himself, with the desperation of despair. He was like a chained spirit, already suffering the tortures of the damned.

In one of his most violent contortions he had overset the lamp beside him. It exploded! The den was on fire!

Wakened by the stifling smoke the poor group of waifs rose in alarm, and rushed for the only door. Scarcely had the last little frightened creature reached the alley and escaped, accompanied by the wild monkey, to the street, ere the whole piles of rags, and other inflammable material, were a mass of blaze. The kerosene-lamp explosion had scattered fire all around. In an instant everything within reach was blazing with fiery heat.

But there lay the dying padrone. Too stupid to rise up, bewildered by the suddenness of the danger, losing all presence of mind in the guilty horror that was upon him, he rolled over helpless into the centre of the burn-

ing fluids, until the whole of him was saturated with kerosene and poison, and kindled into flame — a drunkard all on fire!

The conflagration spread with the rapidity of lightning. At that late hour the neighbors had all retired. The solitary watchman was at the moment off his beat. The waifs were too terrified to give any alarm that could reach any distance from the spot. The cries of children were so familiar in that noisy neighborhood, they were seldom noticed by the neighbors, or by passing strangers.

It was, therefore, some time before any considerable alarm was given; and when the nearest fire company arrived on the spot, the flames had spread too far to be arrested. Everything in the horrid padroni den was swept down before them. In a few swift moments, nothing remained of the infamous ruin but a dirty heap of ashes.

During the height of the fire Vincens was observed through the smoke to be making his blind way, reeling and staggering, toward the table where his book of account was deposited. It appeared that he had been striving to get possession of this recorded proof of his long-continued career of crime. At this spot, where the fragments of the book were found, his skeleton, all blackened and charred, lay crouched up in distorted masses; as if his dying agonies had been fearful in the extreme. By a mysterious coincidence, the place where the murderer perished in the flames, was the very one where Gambrina had just whipped to death the poor little victim of Italian padronism — Jose Maria Aquila!

It was the speedy fulfilment of the prophecy:

'*Vengeance to the wolves that devour the lambs!*'

'VENGEANCE IS MINE, SAITH THE LORD; I WILL REPAY.'

CHAPTER XV.

A FOLD IN THE WEST OF AMERICA.

Theirs are the joys of nature; theirs the smile,
The cherub smile of innocence and peace;
Sorrow is shorn; and when their tears are shed,
They wipe them soon.

Knox.

THERE was welcome home for these outcast Italian children in the house of the Gucciolis. Here they found a safe shelter from the outrages of padronism.

"Come with us, all of you children," said the good old couple, after the fire.

There were thirteen of them, in all.

As the morning broke along a cold and dirty street of New York, this little colony of charity entered the doors of the hospitable dwelling provided for them. They had often, separately, and in companies of twos and fours, entered it before; but never had they come in such a company, nor with such sighs and tears of relief, as they came now.

A warm, hearty breakfast was soon ready for them, of which they every one partook, with an appetite and relish it was delightful to witness.

"Now," said signor Guccioli, with a pleasant smile, "you must all be good children. We will take care of you all, as well as we can. Pretty soon, I suppose, the padroni will be around here, to look after you."

"Please, signor," replied one of the oldest boys, with a sober look, "padroni won't have nothin' to do with us, no more."

"How 's that?" inquired the good old man.

"Why, please, signor, they 's both got burnt up in the fire at the den!"

The children had not then learned of the manner of the death of padrone Gambrina, They supposed that he, too, had perished in the flames with Vincens.

"What an awful end of such wicked men!" exclaimed the old signor. "Surely, sooner or later vengeance will overtake the wolves that devour the lambs! So long as there is an Italian on earth worthy of the name, who has the means at command, the worthy children of Italy shall never want for any good thing. Italian Mission Schools will always be among the best monuments to Italy on American shores. Let us thank God, and take courage," concluded this Italian patriarch.

"And let all people say Amen!"

But this kind christian pair did not stop with songs and exhortations. They gave food to the hungry, and drink to the thirsty, and clothing to the naked, as well as spiritual instruction to the mind. Their plan was to give these Italian waifs not only a good home, and sound instruction, and religious training, but to see that they all learned useful trades. The genius of Italy for music and the arts was as usual developed among them, and needed only encouragement to be brought out and led to success.

To this benevolent end, these judicious Italian philanthropists turned their careful attention to the great West of America.

There was a man of their acquaintance who lived in

one of the Western states. He was a man they knew well. They had perfect confidence in his integrity of character, and sound judgment in business. He was accustomed to find homes for children in the rich and healthful prairie land. Whenever he came to New York, he was sure to call at the Guccioli homestead, and report progress to them of his philanthropic mission. The venerable couple had always some word of cheer to offer, with an occasional new child, who had been rescued from the slums of New York.

The name of this man from the West was Granger. They called him Farmer Granger; though his real name was Mr. Hardy Granger, a genuine representative of Western American intelligence and patriotism. He had been the bearer, repeatedly, of letters to signor Guccioli, requesting him to commend children to the writers, that they might be furnished with good Western homes, and learn to be American citizens, on farms or at trades.

How delightful was this aspect of life, with its new enjoyments and pursuits, to these victims of the Italian padroni! It was like coming out of the cold, dark, dusty tomb into the genial and sunny light of day.

The effect on the children was most curious. They seemed to know not how to understand it, or what to do.

Lucia and Lorette were among the first to adapt themselves to their new situations. They not only saw the fold to which they were directed, and were ready to enter it, but their religious training by the Gucciolis led them to listen to the voice of the Good Shepherd, from within.

It was beautiful to see these tender lambs, so long hunted and driven, cold, wet and hungry, on the dark

and rugged mountains, now entering the quiet and peaceful fold of christian sympathy and patriotic protection.

Little thought Samaria's daughter,
On that ne'er forgotten day,
That the gentle Shepherd sought her,
As a sheep astray.

Outcasts from the great world; waifs floating on the busy current of humanity; forsaken by or torn from both fathers and mothers; looked down upon, often, as beggars and thieves, only to be shunned and despised; who should wonder that our city children, of this class, sink into the sloughs of neglect, and miserably perish in dens of infamy?

But the Good Shepherd saw them. He took them by the hand. He put it in the hearts of His faithful people to care for them, even as a loving shepherd careth for his lambs.

Before they started on their journey the two girls took old Mr. Guccioli and Mr. Granger with them, and went down to Castle Garden. Here was the place of their first landing in New York. They passed together through this House of the Emigrants. It was here these children took their first draughts of the bitter cup of padronism. How changed the scene since then! Their wicked oppressors, the padroni, were both dead; the den in which they had suffered so much was burned to the ground; and now the great West was opening its friendly arms to receive them to christian homes. It was like a dream; and yet they found it to be a present and sweet reality.

The little company paused in silence at the ruins of the den — not yet rebuilt. How thankful were those young hearts as they stood on that memorable spot! With sighs of relief, and tears of gratitude, they turned silently away.

It was but a short walk from there to the Italian Mission Industrial School. The children were assembled, at the time, all being taught the rudiments of a useful education. The scene was delightful. There were no padroni there!

After a sweet song, in an Italian tune, which Lucia and Lorette at once recognized with pleasure, Mr. Granger was invited to address the school:

"Little children," said he, in his quaint way, "yes, and you bigger children, too — I 'm a farmer, from way out West. I live on what is called the perrairie-land, when I 'm to hum. The ground around my house, and, for the matter of that, for miles away off on the perrarie, is e'en a most as level as this floor. It 's a wonderful great country, children; and ever so much ground lyin' out o' doors. There ain't no need of chil-

ITALIAN SCHOOL BUILDING.

dren bein' stived up in close cities and towns, or runnin' the risk of bein' hunted and stolen, while there 's such a plenty of good land out West to be had for next to nothin' by anybody who will come and live on it, and work on it, as they ought to. There 's the sweet air, for you, children; an' plenty on 't, too! An', for the matter o' that, for your fathers', an' your mothers' an' all the rest. These two little gals, here, is agoin' out West with me; an' I 've good, nice homes for 'em; all ready for 'em, as soon as they step off the kears. Now any of you that want to come out there, by'me by, you jest speak to Mr. Guccioli, near here, and come right along! Child-hunters can't ketch you out there!"

The children clapped their hands at this straightforward Western speech. It was so honest and so natural.

And then signor Guccioli and his dear old wife told them it was every word of it true.

Next morning Lucia and Lorette accompanied Farmer Granger on his journey. One small chest sufficed for the luggage of both the girls. It contained comfortable clothing, including neat articles of different kinds; and in one end, carefully stowed away, so as to be easily accessible, was the New Testament in Italian, and within its covers, at the front, the religious tract in the same language, which the American traveller had given to Lorette, in Florence, years ago.

As the young emigrants stood with their friends in a retired corner of the railway depot, they joined their voices together, and sweetly sang:

There 's a land that is fairer than day,
And by faith we can see it afar;
For the Father waits over the way,
To prepare us a dwelling-place there:
In the sweet by and by
We shall meet on that beautiful shore.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE PRAIRIE SHELTER.

We heeded not the wild blast,
  Nor winter's icy air;
We found our climate in our hearts:
  And it was summer there.

Butler.

THAT was a pleasant journey from New York to Prairie-Land.

The two children found themselves well entertained by the way, at every stage. When they arrived in sight of their new home, and were about leaving the cars,

"There it is!" cried Farmer Granger, pointing out the window with a joyous smile, "that's it; over there!"

The girls looked across the prairie, a short distance; and there, embowered in an orchard, surrounded by trellises and hanging vines, with a forest of trees in the back-ground, stood a neat farm-house.

"That's 'Prairie Home,' children," continued Farmer Granger, as he landed with his charge on the platform; "that's where we're going. And 'mother Granger,' as I love to call her, will be there, I know, to bid us welcome."

Nor was Farmer Granger at all mistaken. Standing on the porch, the picture of health and good-nature, a pattern of a Western farmer's wife, the good woman greeted them all with true Western hospitality.

Never was there a more cordial welcome given to guests than that which Mrs. Granger gave these poor children from far over the sea. They were invited in as those who had been pleasantly looked for, and for whom a home had been prepared in the heart as well as the house.

Months wore on. The two girls had begun to learn the independent ways of American farmers. Their sweet music added new charms to the prairie homestead. They seemed to know the blessedness of honest toil as they never knew it before.

But the time came when the two girls must part. It was a sad day. They had grown up together as children, in Florence, and seemed to be inseparable. Together they had come to America, and passed through the terrible privations of padronism. How could they be separated? Having been hunted together, could they not now dwell together in peace?

It was finally arranged that when Lucia went to the house of a near neighbor, which had been selected for her, Lorette should be her companion on the way, and remain with her for a short time.

Mr. David Storey, and Martha, his wife, to whom Lucia was to be sent, were among the first settlers of that prairie. Mr. Storey had with his own hands felled the wood that built the only log-cabin that at one time stood in sight, for miles around. This cabin had now given way to a much larger and more comfortable mansion, in which they dwelt. They had no children. From what they had heard of her history and qualities, they looked forward with pleasure to the coming of their new ward — perhaps as one who might become their adopted daughter.

What a change for Lucia!

The house was called "Woodland Grove." It stood on the margin of one of those clear, silvery lakes with which the prairie country of that part of America so much abounds. Fruit-trees, vines, flowers, and other accompaniments of an American home, marked the quiet spot. It seemed like paradise to the little wanderers. The welcome to Woodland Grove was as cordial as that which had been extended at Prairie Home.

So the time wore away. The two girls were happily and usefully employed on the prairie of America. They had both at last escaped from the toils of the child-hunters.

CHAPTER XVIII.

A RE-UNION.

Affection bringeth down to earth its native heaven;
Earth hath naught else that may supply its place.
Landon.

BOTH Lucia and Lorette, from their happy American homes, still turned their thoughts lingeringly to Italy. They had been so situated, as will readily be conceived, as to hear but seldom from their parents.

One beautiful October day, when the work devolved upon her by her position was all done, Lorette sat down to write to her father and mother. Here is a copy of her letter:

"PRAIRIE HOME —
October 17th, 18—.

"*Dear Parents:* — This is the first time I have had a good opportunity to write to you, since I came to America.

"Lucia is still with me. We are living both together, out West from the city of New York. The padroni are both dead; so I can write, now, without being punished by them.

"Oh! dear father and mother! you don't know how much we have suffered. But I can't tell you any more about that, now. We are happy, again, and are with kind people. What is best of all, I hope we have both become christians. Oh! I understand, now, as I did n't use to, all about that little book 'COME TO JESUS,' which the good American lady gave me, ever so long ago, in Florence. I hope I know what coming to Jesus means. Oh! it makes me so happy to love and serve Him!

"But what I took up my pen to write this letter for, beside telling you how I am, and where I am, and how Lucia is, here close by where I live, is to invite you both to come and stay with me, here in America. Farmer — that is — Mr. Hardy Granger, where I have such a good place, has told me I might invite you; and mother Granger says she would like ever so much to have you come. They have a convenient cottage house, near by, where you can have a home, and be ever so comfortable.

"Now, dear papa and mamma! say, won't you come and live near me, here in America?

"Mr. Granger says he will write to the American Consul, at Leghorn, who will send you word at Florence, and fix it all right about the passage.

"Mamma! you coax papa to come, won't you, please?

"Farmer Granger — they call him Honorable Hardy Granger, out here in the West, — will tell the Consul all about where we live, and the way to come.

"This from your dutiful daughter,

"LORETTE FERENZA."

Lucia was almost as anxious to have Mr. and Mrs. Ferenza emigrate to America as Lorette was; for then, she thought, perhaps her own parents would soon follow.

"O!" cried see, clapping her hands, in her exuberant way, "would n't that be nice?"

Early in the following spring the answer came to Lorette's letter. To the inexpressible joy of Lucia the news accompanied it that her parents, also, would emigrate. Here was a surprise, indeed! Lucia was as truly affectionate as Lorette; but knowing the peculiar ties that bound her parents to Italy, she had hardly expected that they would be so ready to come to America.

Both Farmer Granger and Mr. Storey had made the arrangements for emigration so complete, that the thing was easily accomplished.

Towards the close of a sunny day in the ensuing month of June, word came to Farmer Granger that a company of emigrants wished to see him at the railway station. Instantly guessing who they were, the good man hurried to the place. It is needless to say *who* accompanied him.

The people at the station had been put to an utter loss by the strangers. They could not understand a word they said—except that one party could repeat "Granger," and the other party "Storey." This was a sufficient cue, however, and it was not long ere the whole thing was perfectly well understood.

What a scene! Such hugging and kissing! Such silvery volumes of Italian! Such flowing tributes to the dear old land!

Farmer Granger and Uncle David Storey stood in the midst of the crowd, looking on with delight, and listening with curious wonder to a language of which they knew next to nothing,

Among that little company of emigrants the mingled tears flowed down like rain. Joy and sorrow ran over their faces together, and alternate sobs of grief and bursts of merriment marked the scene. There was no child-hunter there!

CHAPTER XIX.

THE PLEASANT JOURNEY.

'Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for thou art with me.'—*Psalm XXIII.*

THERE was one shadow on the picture. Mrs. Ferenza had come to America a confirmed invalid. Even the genial climate of her native Italy, and the tender assiduity of friends, could not keep her health from sinking.

A quiet home was at once provided for her husband, in which she shared. A useful occupation was soon given him, suited to his former pursuits; and everything around was made as agreeable as possible to the new-comers. It was America's welcome to Italy.

"I have just taken a long journey," said Mrs. Ferenza, one day, when alone with her daughter, in their neat American cottage. "But I am about to take another, and a longer one."

"Why, mother!" replied the young girl, with evident anxiety: "what do you mean? Where are you going?"

Mrs. Ferenza was silent. Her soft blue eyes were turned upward. She paused a moment of unspoken prayer, and quietly replied:

"I am going *there*, my child!" pointing her delicate hand toward Heaven.

Noticing the inquiring look that her daughter gave, and that her eyes were swimming with tears, and her lips quivering with emotion, she slowly continued:

"I cannot tell you all, now, Lorette. I am too weak. Indeed, dear daughter! you don't know how very weak I am."

"Oh! my mother!" was all that Lorette could utter, as she leaned over gently on the bosom where she had so often lain when a little child.

For many succeeding moments the mother and the daughter lay thus in each other's arms.

That evening, when Mr. Ferenza returned from his work, he saw at once that something unusual had occurred. Both mother and daughter looked downcast, and their eyes were red with weeping.

He knew, at a glance, the whole truth. His wife was dying of consumption. He had seen the initial signs of the dread disease growing on her cheeks. Now the seeds that had for years been planted within her loving breast were blossoming for the grave.

Stepping softly to her side, and imprinting a warm kiss on her pallid lips, he took her cold hand and tenderly pressed it in both of his own.

"Giovanni! dear Giovanni!" she murmured, like the music of an Æolian harp, "I am going on another journey; and we must part! *I shall not go alone!*"

As he looked his pain through his tearful eyes, she sweetly added:

"But it's a pleasant journey, Giovanni!—a very pleasant journey. I have been for a long while getting ready for it; and everything is prepared. You remember how often I have told you how my mind was affected by the little American book that was given to Lorette. It was the book with the invitation on it—'COME TO JESUS.' I began to try to come to Jesus when I first read that invitation; and have been trying, ever since, to come nearer and nearer to HIM. When that good

French minister, who left his card with us at the time he paid us that christian visit, more fully explained to us our duty, I gave my heart to Christ. I have been so happy ever since then! I am so happy now! Giovanni! I want to have you love Jesus with all your heart. Then, when I am gone, you will come to Heaven, too, and we will live there together forever!"

She sank back exhausted on the lounge. Mr. Ferenza had knelt close by her side, and bent down his weeping eyes in the hollow of his hand. His whole frame shook with suppressed emotions.

Angela Ferenza was no common woman. Born and educated in a christian country, she had long been a christian in name. But she had now come to Christ, by faith in prayer, and without the intervention of extraneous objects. She repented of her sins and believed on Christ for herself; and for herself, and not for another, Christ had accepted her soul.

One beautiful day in the autumn — one of those rich American days which are so much like their kindred days in Italy — Mrs. Ferenza called her little family circle around her. Her husband was by her head, holding it tenderly in his arms; and near by, bathing the soft marble brow, was the once hunted and now recovered Lorette. Lucia, changed, yet charming Lucia, stood at the foot of the bed, while Mr. and Mrs. Garcia, who had accompanied the Ferenzas, Mr. and Mrs. Granger and Mr. and Mrs. Storey, were grouped at hand. Religion had also completely changed the Garcias.

The evening sun of America was shedding his golden rays on these Italian guests, and their American hosts. The room was full of resplendent light, softened by the neat white curtains that festooned the windows.

"Bend your face down close to mine, dear Giovanni!"

whispered the dying wife to her husband. "Come, daughter, and stand on the other side," she continued, glancing at Lorette. "Now sing to me!" she added, faintly: "sing me a song of Heaven! Sing it to one of the tunes of Italy!"

The little company could only answer this dying request with sighs and sobs, which continued for some moments. Lucia, the gifted singer, began with a heart-broken voice of sweetest melody, and sang so softly, so tenderly, it seemed as if an unseen seraph were singing in the room:

I am going up home, to my Father's house,
Where the many bright mansions be;
To the city whose streets are all covered with gold,
To the walls and the gates pure and fair to behold,
Which the righteous shall ever see!
O! home, sweet home, sweet home!
I am going to Heaven, my home!
Beyond the bright gate
Many mansions await
The weary who journey home!

Just as the last lingering echo of the word 'home' died away in the room, the happy Italian christian entered on the Heavenly part of her 'PLEASANT JOURNEY.' She had gone home to Heaven.

CHAPTER XX.

HOME AT LAST.

Let us depart! the universal sun
Confines not to one land his blessed beams;
Nor is man rooted, like a tree whose seed
The winds on some uncongenial coast
Have cast, where none may ever prosper.

Southey.

MR. FERENZA and his daughter landed on the pier at Leghorn.

"This is the stone pillar where I left mother leaning, when I sailed away for America," said Lorette, as the two passed up to the town.

"Yes," responded Mr. Ferenza, "I have stopped at it many a time, since you have been gone, as I have visited this old harbor. She is happy now. Her 'pleasant journey' has indeed ended in Heaven. We would not call her back, daughter, even if we could."

They were soon in Florence. A short drive brought them again to the *Mansion di Lapo*. It was still vacant. They entered, and passed rapidly all over it.

"Just the thing!" exclaimed Lorette, with a sudden rapture, after the first silent pause of subdued memories had passed. "Let us now plan it all out. Here shall be our partition to separate the children — the boys from the girls. What do you say, father, to opening another door for a new entrance, on the side toward

the Arno; and a bay window, for more light and better ventilation?"

"All right," he replied, with a smile. "We will fix the school-room American fashion, just as it should be, to do our best for the scholars. Our friends in America will stand by us, I am sure!"

"And Lucia will be so glad to come back to Italy, and join us!" continued Lorette, "when we get everything all nicely fixed."

"Lucia shall be here without delay," said Mr. Ferenza, joining in the enthusiasm of Lorette. "Every obstacle to her return is now removed in America. I am certain that Farmer Granger and Deacon Storey will make all right."

"O! won't it be delightful!" said Lorette, unconsciously clapping her hands as she spoke, "to have a Mission School, here in Florence, just like the Italian Mission School in New York?"

"It will, indeed!" responded the father, glancing fondly in the face of his daughter, and observing, as he did so, her striking resemblance to her mother. He remembered, too, at the moment, that one of the last requests of his wife was that this school might be established. How soon had her prayers been answered!

The observant traveller in Florence, passing up from the Arno by the *Palazzo Vecchia*, near the church of *San Marco*, will observe a small neat sign swinging from a contiguous wall. In Roman letters he may read these words:

E'VIVA ITALIA!

CASA DI LAPO.

L'ESCOLA DI

LUCIA ET LORETTE.

[TRANSLATION.]

LONG LIVE ITALY!

MANSION DI LAPO.

SCHOOL OF

LUCIA AND LORETTE.

The merchant Marina, like his fellow-criminals in America, had fallen into habits of dissipation. Stimulated by the drinking frivolities of his equally guilty wife, he had died in a drunken fit; and she soon followed him to a drunkard's grave.

Captain del Paso had been found dead in one of the vaults of the grand cathedral, with an empty bottle by his side.

Thus, one after another, the hunters of the children of Italy had perished in their crimes. By flood, by fire, by poison.

Lucia was soon returned from America to Florence, bringing with her both father and mother, who had been happily regenerated by the grace of God.

On one of Italy's fairest of her many fair days, when the two school-mistresses, Lucia and Lorette, had been completely installed in their beautiful school-room in the classic old mansion, a stranger entered.

He had just come with good news from sympathizing friends in America, and a generous donation for the school.

"Many thanks for your kindness," said signor Ferenza to the stranger. Mr. Ferenza had now become quite used to his new vocation, and made rapid strides in adding to the scholastic knowledge his American experience had given him. "We shall never forget the debt of gratitude we as christian Italians owe to christians on American shores," said Lorette.

"Nay," said the stranger, "America owes her very existence among the nations of the earth to the discovery of an Italian sailor. In what better way can she repay her obligation, than by caring for the dependent children of Italy — adopted by her, as if they were her own? I have the honor," the stranger continued, "to occupy a public position in America, as one of the representatives of the Italian government. I am doing what I can in my position, both in the United States and Italy, for Italian children.

GOD BLESS ITALY!
GOD BLESS AMERICA!"

There was a warm response from all the teachers in that Italian school-room in Florence, in which all the children present heartily joined.

May every reader of this little volume sincerely respond:

LET THERE BE NO MORE CHILD-HUNTERS THROUGHOUT THE WORLD!

M

ADDENDA.

Furnished for publication in this volume by COUNT LITTA, *Italian Ambassador at Washington.*

[LITERAL TRANSLATION.]

VICTOR EMANUEL II.,

BY THE GRACE OF GOD AND THE WILL OF THE PEOPLE

KING OF ITALY.

THE Senate and the Chamber of Deputies have approved: We have sanctioned and do publish the following:

SECTION 1. Any person who shall intrust, or under whatever pretence shall commit, to natives or strangers, other persons of either sex under the age of eighteen years, though his or her own children or pupils, and any native or stranger who shall receive them with the intent to employ them in the kingdom in whatever manner or under whatever denomination in the practise of wandering professions as *Saltinbanks*, *Witches*, *Charlatans*, *Errant Players* or *Singers*, *Rope-dancers*, *Guessers*, *Fortune-tellers*, *Animal Exposers*, *Beggars and similar wanderers*, shall be punished with the imprisonment from one to three months and fined from 51 to 250 Lire. The sentence, by right, is

followed by the removal of guardians from their guardianship. The court can also exclude the guardians from the offices of guardianship, and deprive the parents of the rights of fatherly authority, for such time as will be deemed proper on behalf of their children, agreeably to the Sections 233 and 239 of the Civil Code.

Section 2. Any person who, in the kingdom, shall keep with him or herself other persons under eighteen years of age practising wandering professions, as mentioned in Section 1, who are not his or her own children, shall be punished with the imprisonment from three to six months and fined from 100 to 500 Lire.

If the minor has been abandoned, or in consequence of want of nourishment or of ill treatment or abuses has been severely injured in his or her health, or has been compelled to abandon the keeper, the offender shall be imprisoned from six months to one year, provided that the facts shall not constitute a greater offence.

Section 3. Any one who shall trust or deliver in the kingdom, or take abroad in order to trust or deliver to natives or strangers abroad, persons under eighteen years of age, however his or her own children or pupils, and any native or stranger who shall receive such persons in order to take, trust or deliver them abroad for the purpose to employ them in whatever way and under whatever denomination in the practise of wandering professions as shown in Section 1, shall be punished with imprisonment from six months to one year, and fined from 100 to 500 Lire.

To the guardians and parents guilty of the offence specified in this Section, shall be applied the dispositions of the second part of Section 1.

Section 4. The natives who in a foreign state shall keep in the practise of the wandering professions mentioned in Section 1, native persons under the age of

eighteen years, shall be punished with imprisonment from one to two years, and fined from 500 to 1000 Lire.

Whenever there shall result from the proceedings that the minor has been abandoned, or that in consequence of want of nourishment or of ill treatments or cruelty, has been severely injured in his or her health, or has been compelled to leave the keeper, the punishment of the imprisonment can be extended as far as three years, provided that the fact shall not constitute a greater offence.

Section 5. Whoever by violence or fraud shall steal or cause to be stolen persons under the age of twenty-one years, or by arts or seductions take away, or cause to be taken away, persons under the age of eighteen years, from their parents, guardians or tutors, in order to employ them in the kingdom or abroad in the practise of the wandering professions mentioned in Section 1, shall be punished, in case of violence or fraud, with the confinement of three to five years if the employment has to take place in the kingdom, and with the confinement from five to seven years if the employment has to take place abroad; and in case of arts or seductions with the imprisonment from one to three years if the employment has to take place in the kingdom, and with the imprisonment from three to five years if the employment has to take place abroad.

With the same punishments, applied in the minimum of the time according to the difference of the cases, shall be punished whoever in the kingdom or in a foreign state shall keep with him or herself, in the practise of the wandering professions mentioned in Section 1, persons under the age of eighteen years stolen with violence or fraud, or drawn away with arts or seductions.

Section 6. Whenever the minor stolen or taken away has been abandoned, or in consequence of want of nourishment or of ill treatments or duress, has suffered great

injury in his or her health, or has been compelled to leave the keeper, the offender shall be punished, in case of stealing by violence or fraud, with the confinement from five to seven years if the fact of abandonment or of ill treatment has taken place in the kingdom, and with the confinement from seven to ten years if it has taken place abroad; and in case of drawing away by arts or seductions, with the imprisonment from three to five years, if the fact of abandonment or ill treatments has taken place in the kingdom, and with the confinement from three to seven years if it has taken place abroad.

Whenever the fact by itself shall constitute a greater offence, there shall be applied the punishment of this degree, and never in the minimum of it.

But if, before any proceeding or instance, the offender shall voluntarily set at liberty the person stolen or taken away, without having offended or abused said person, returning the same to his or her family, or to the house or to the persons from whom said person was taken away, or putting the same in a sure place, the punishment of the confinement shall be changed into imprisonment from one to three years, and the punishment of the imprisonment shall be from one to six months.

Section 7. With the punishment enacted in the preceding sections shall be punished not only the authors of the offences therein mentioned, but also their accomplices.

Section 8. Whatever contract of trusting or committing in any form it may be disposed for one of the purposes mentioned in Sections 1 and 3, either made before or after the publication of this law, is null and of no effect, however the scope may have been concealed or simulated in whatever way and either through interposed indorsements in the kingdom or abroad.

Section 9. The parents, guardians and any other

person who shall have intrusted or delivered persons under the age of eighteen years, to be employed in the practise of wandering professions, shall, under penalty of being fined from 51 to 100 Lire, within three months from the publication of this law, denounce or notify to the Mayor of the community in which they reside, or to the Diplomatic or Consular Representatives of the kingdom of Italy if they are abroad, their children or pupils employed in the kingdom or abroad in the professions mentioned in Section 1.

The notification or declaration shall contain the full name, the age and place of birth of the minors and of the persons to whom they were delivered, and with whom they are, the place of the present or last residence, the profession in which they were employed, and all the informations necessary in order to trace them.

Section 10. All persons keeping with themselves in the kingdom or abroad any natives under the age of eighteen years employed in the practise of wandering professions, shall, under the penalty of being fined from 100 to 500 Lire, denounce or notify, within four months from the publication of this law, to the Mayor of the community where they reside, or to the Diplomatic or Consular Representatives of the King of Italy, if they are abroad, all persons under eighteen years of age, kept by them employed in the practise of the wandering professions.

At the same time they must return them to their families if they are in the kingdom, or at their own expenses cause them to be returned to their native country if they are abroad; and not being able to do so directly, they must within the same time present them to the Mayor, or to the Diplomatic or Consular Royal Representatives, who shall provide for their return to their families or to their countries as disposed in Section 12.

Section 11. The Mayors and the Royal Representatives abroad, within six months from the publication of this law, shall officially complete, according to the information gathered, a catalogue of the native minors of their community or consulate, who are employed in the kingdom or abroad, in the wandering professions mentioned in Section 1. They shall avail themselves of the notifications or declarations prescribed in the Sections 9 and 10, and complete them in what is necessary, gathering and adding all other informations, which may be useful to return said minors to their families or to their countries, or for the application of the penalties of this law.

Section 12. Said catalogue shall be forwarded to the Ministry of the Interior, and at the same time the Mayors and Royal Diplomatic and Consular Representatives shall dispose for the immediate return of the minors included in the same catalogue, to their families, or to their countries.

The necessary expenses, if said Royal Representatives could not have other means at their disposition, shall be advanced by the government, with the right of reimbursement on the responsible charge of the parents or guardians, keepers or padroni.

Section 13. Whenever the minors mentioned in the preceding Sections shall be without parents, guardians or any other person to take care of them, and of their education, they shall be sheltered in a public establishment of education or work until they shall be of age, or they shall have learnt a profession or a trade.

Section 14. The penal action for the facts foreseen by the present law, shall be officially carried on by the public Ministry, and also in contumacy of the accused absent from the kingdom. Shall be applied to the same, if not otherwise disposed by this law, the first part of the Penal

Code and the general regulations on the competency of the Judicial Authorities.

In the trial there can be produced also the minutes, returns, letters and other evidences, however private, coming from abroad.

SECTION 15. The dispositions of the present law shall have effect from its publication. But those of the 2d and 4th Sections shall take effect at the end of the four months allowed by Section 10.

Notwithstanding if there is any fact already punishable by the Penal Code, there shall be applied the disposition of this Section.

We order the present law, bearing the seal of the States, to be inserted in the official collection of the laws and decrees of the kingdom of Italy, and to be observed and cause to be observed by all persons that it may concern as a law of the kingdom.

Given in Rome, December 21st, 1873.

VICTOR EMANUEL.
VIGLIANI.
VISCONTI VENOSTA.

This is to certify that the above is the exact literal translation of the Italian law forbidding the employment of children in vagrant professions, promulgated by a Royal Decree of the 21st December, 1873.

New York, 23d January, 1874.

The Consul General of Italy in the U. S.,

[L. S.] FERD. DE LUCA.

LAWS OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.

PADRONI ACT.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America, in Congress assembled:

SECTION 1. That whoever shall knowingly and wilfully bring into the United States, or the Territories thereof, any person inveigled or forcibly kidnapped in any other country, with intent to hold such person so inveigled or kidnapped in confinement, or to any involuntary service, any other person for any term whatever, and every person who shall knowingly and wilfully hold to involuntary service any person so sold and bought, shall be deemed guilty of a felony; and on conviction thereof shall be imprisoned for a term not exceeding five years, and pay a fine not exceeding five thousand dollars.

SECTION 2. That every person who shall be accessory to any of the felonies herein declared, either before or after the fact, shall be deemed guilty of felony; and on conviction thereof be imprisoned for a term not exceeding five years, and pay a fine not exceeding one thousand dollars.

43*d Congress*, *chapter* 464. *Approved June* 23, 1874.

PADRONI LAW OF PENNSYLVANIA.

[OFFICIAL COPY.]

Furnished for this Volume by COUNT LITTA, *Italian Chargé d'Affaires, from the Archives of the Embassy.*

No. 110.

AN ACT

To PREVENT TRAFFIC IN CHILDREN.

SECTION 1. Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania in General Assembly met, and it is hereby enacted by the authority of the same, That all and every person or persons, whether parent, relative, guardian, employer or otherwise, having in his or their care, custody or control, lawful or unlawful, any minor under the age of eighteen years, who shall apprentice, give away, let out, hire or otherwise dispose of such minor or minors to any person, for the purpose of singing, playing on musical instruments, begging, or for any mendicant business whatsoever, in the streets, roads and other highways of this Commonwealth, and whosoever shall take, receive, hire, employ, use or have in custody any such minor for the vocation, occupation, calling, service or purpose of singing, playing upon musical instruments, or begging upon the streets, roads and other highways of this Commonwealth, and whosoever shall take, receive, hire, employ, use or have in custody any such minor for the vocation, occupation, calling, service or purpose of singing, playing upon musical instruments or begging upon the streets, roads or other highways of this Commonwealth, or for any mendicant business whatever, shall be deemed to be guilty of a misdemeanor, and, upon conviction thereof before any court

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